

THE Atlantic

MAY 2004

MY TIMES

A YEAR AFTER THE
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ACKNOWLEDGES HIS
MISTAKES, AND WARNS
OF A CRISIS FOR THE
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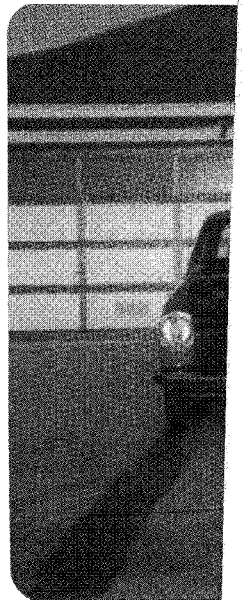
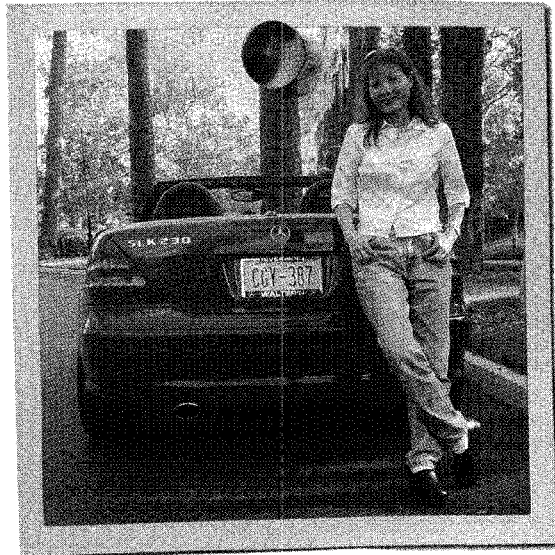
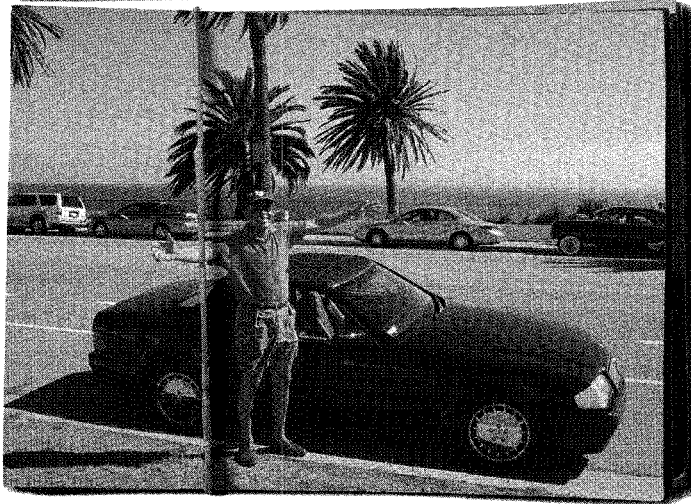
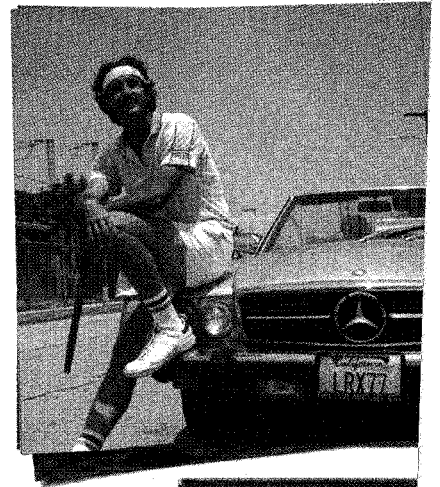
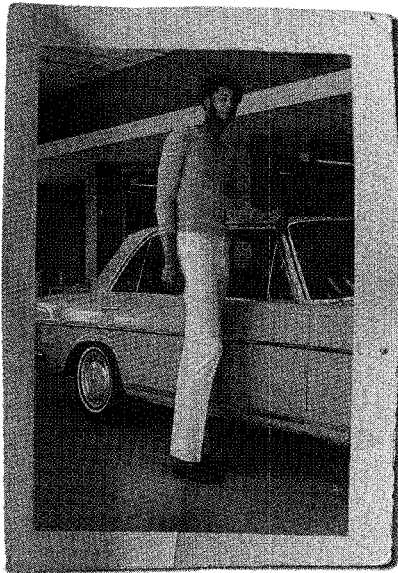
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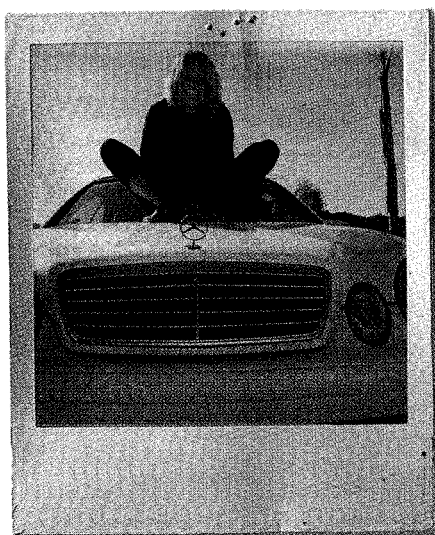
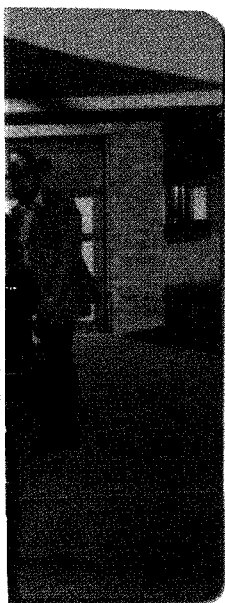
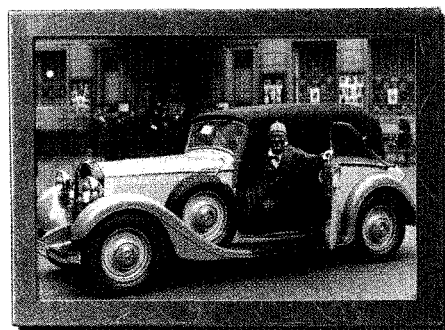
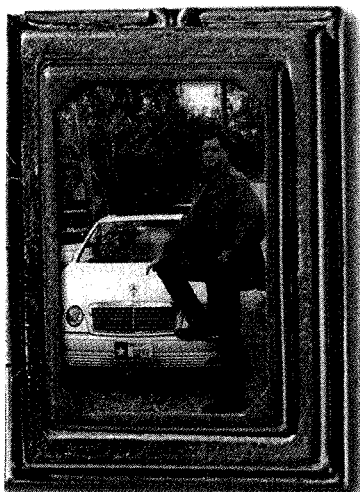
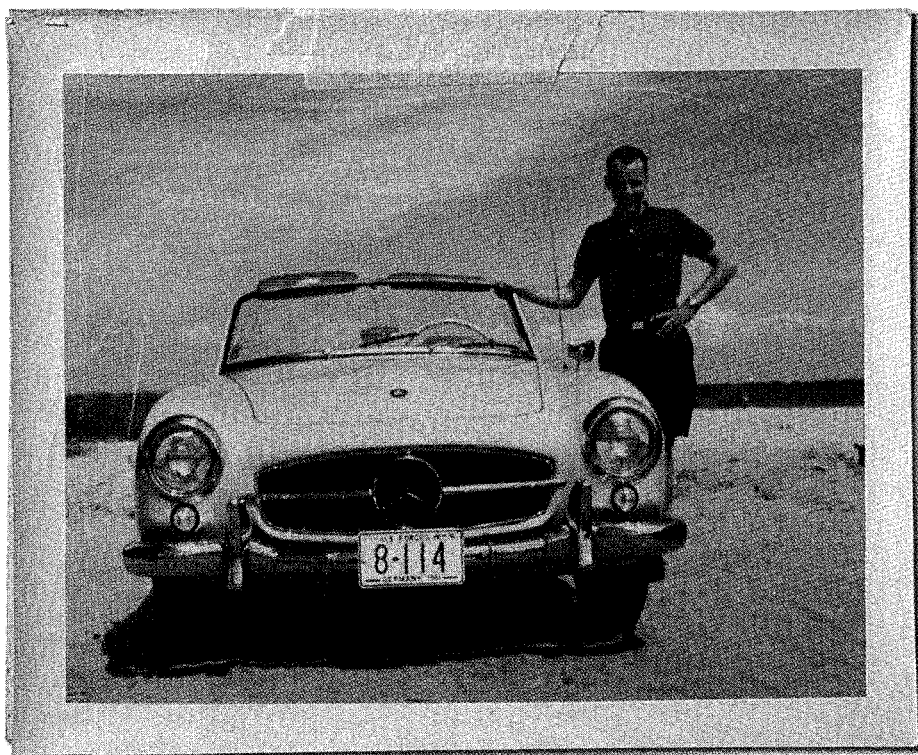
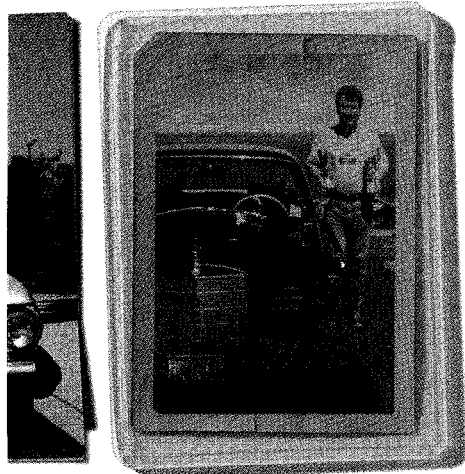
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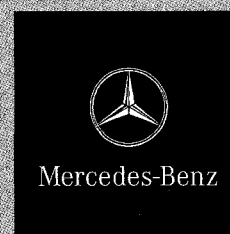
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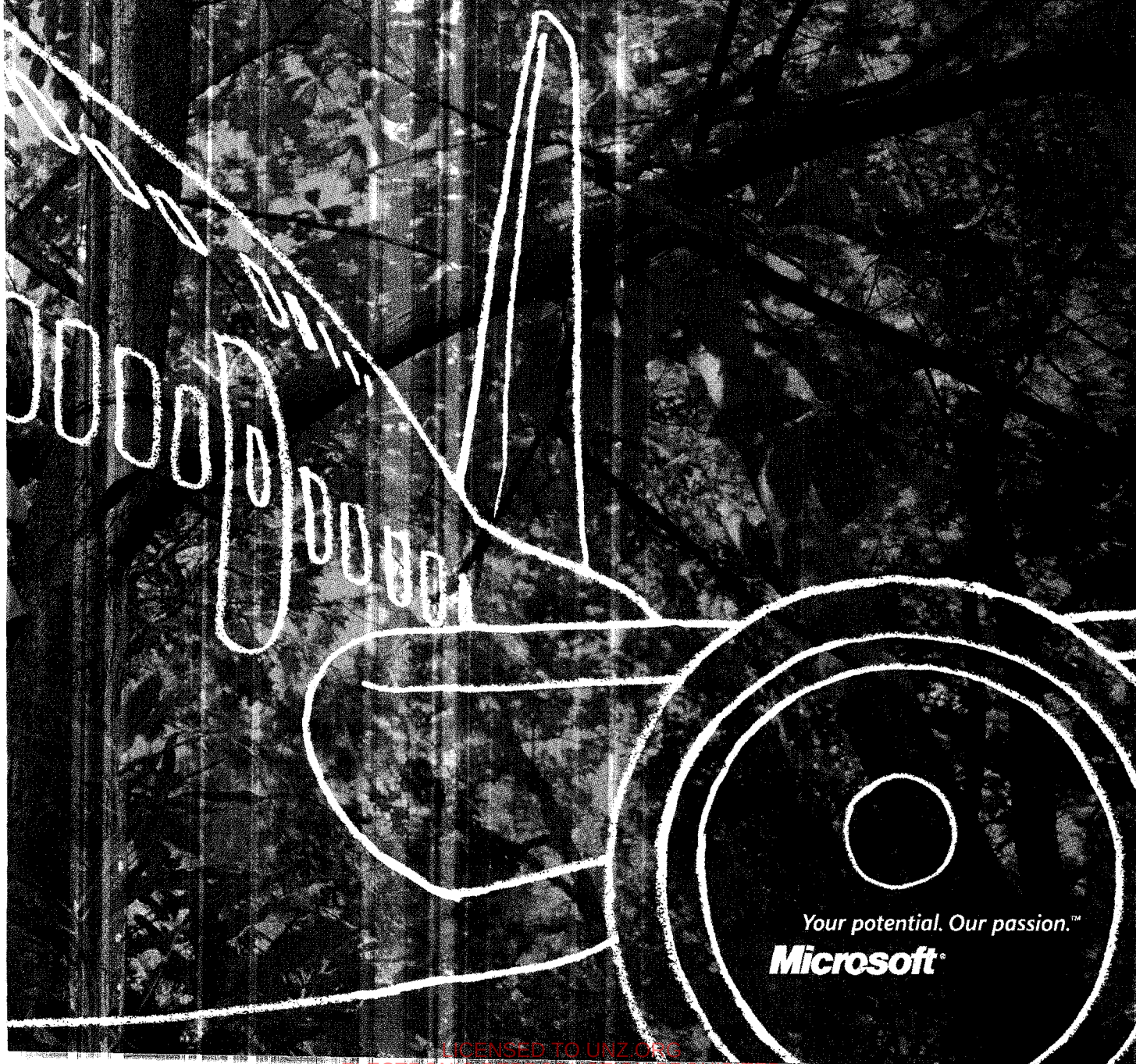


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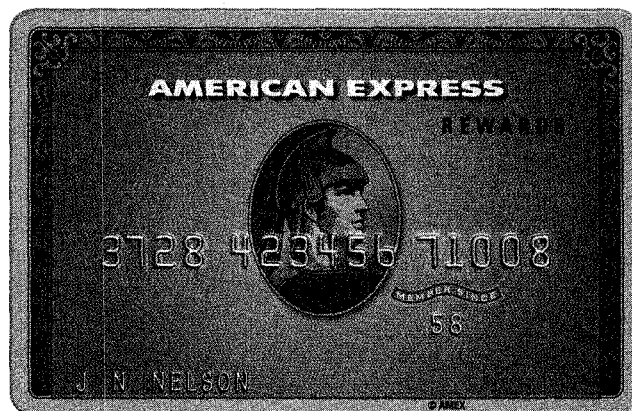


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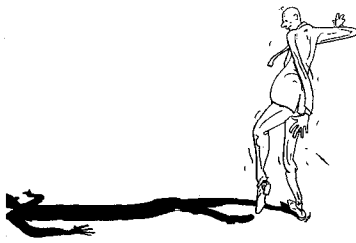
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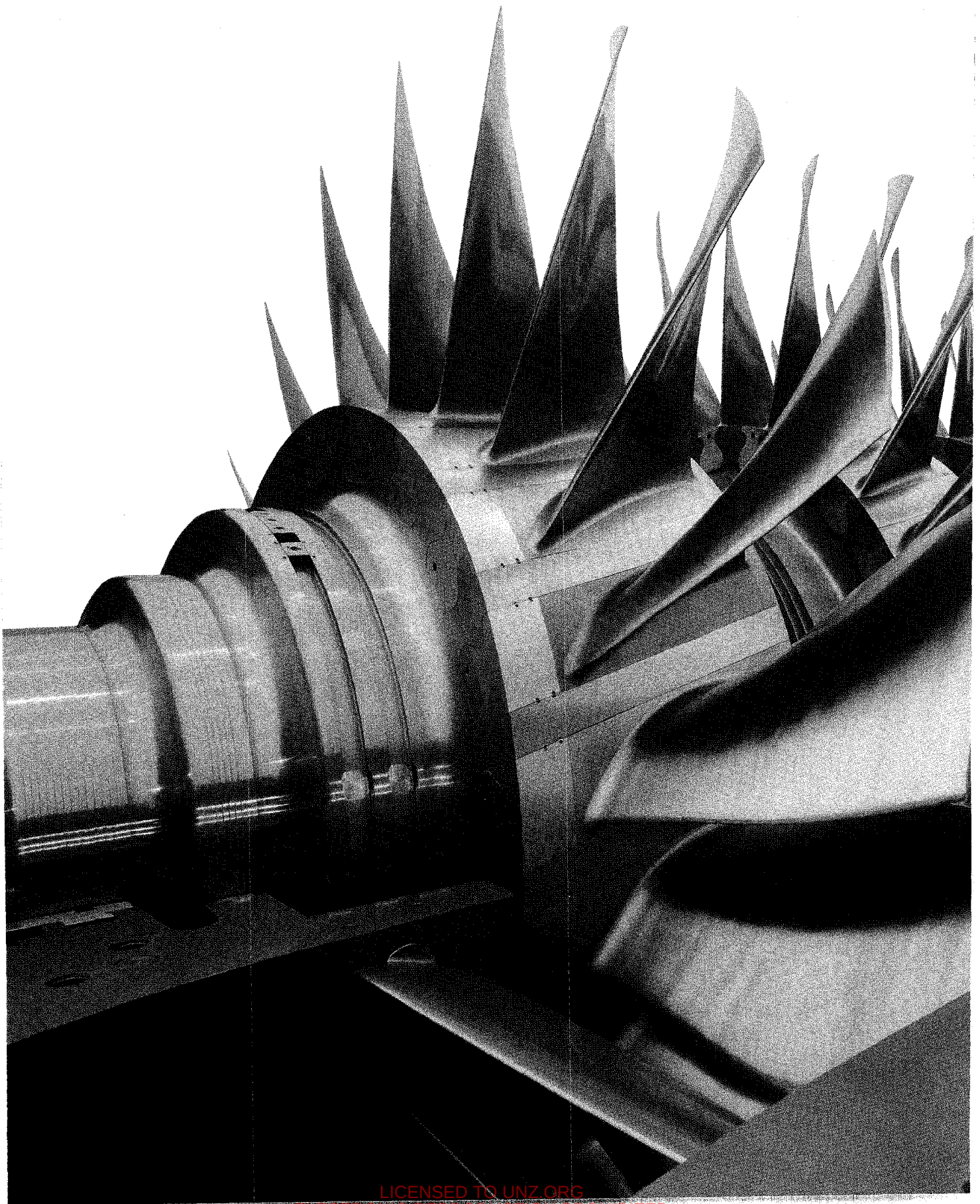
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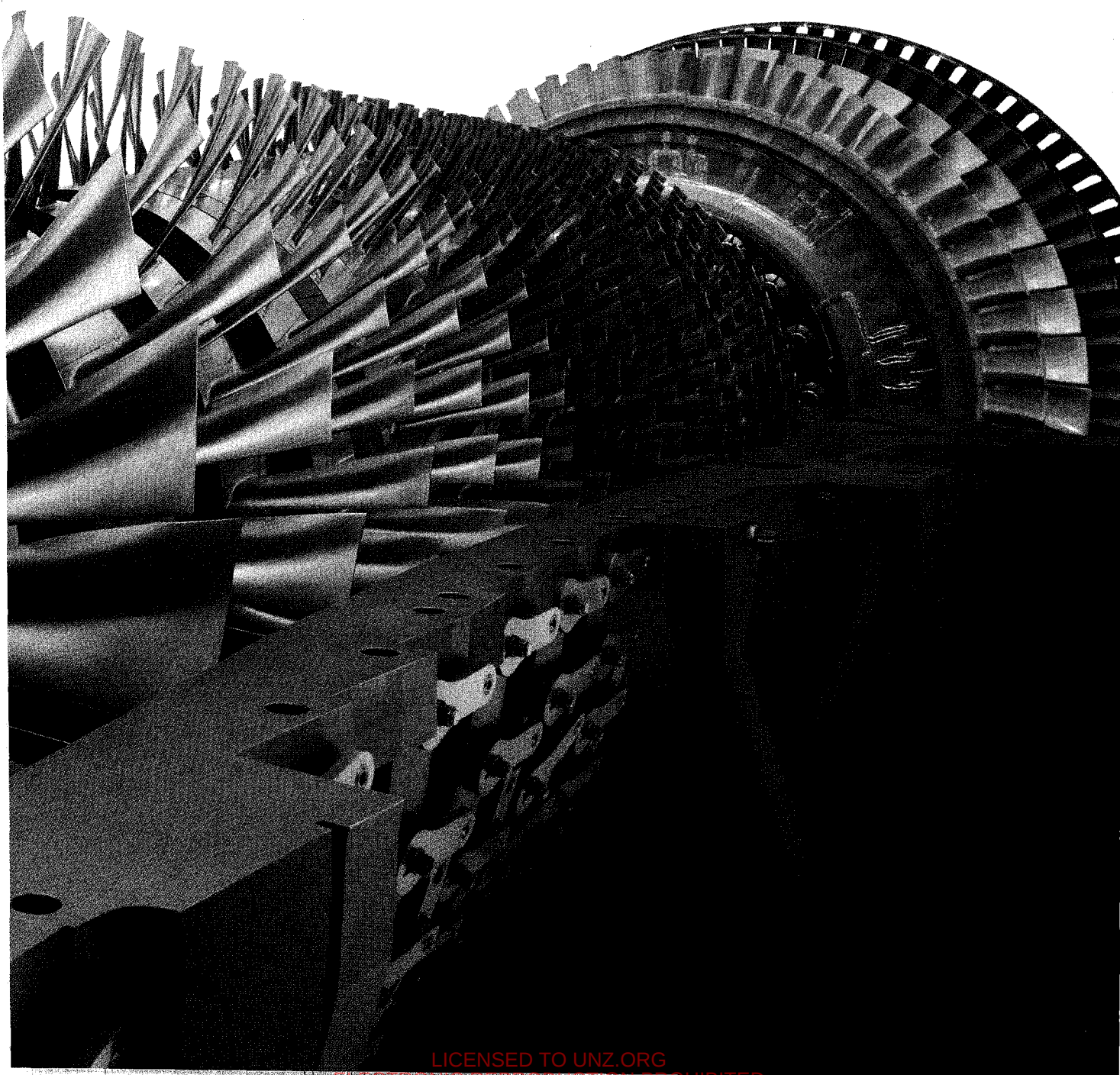
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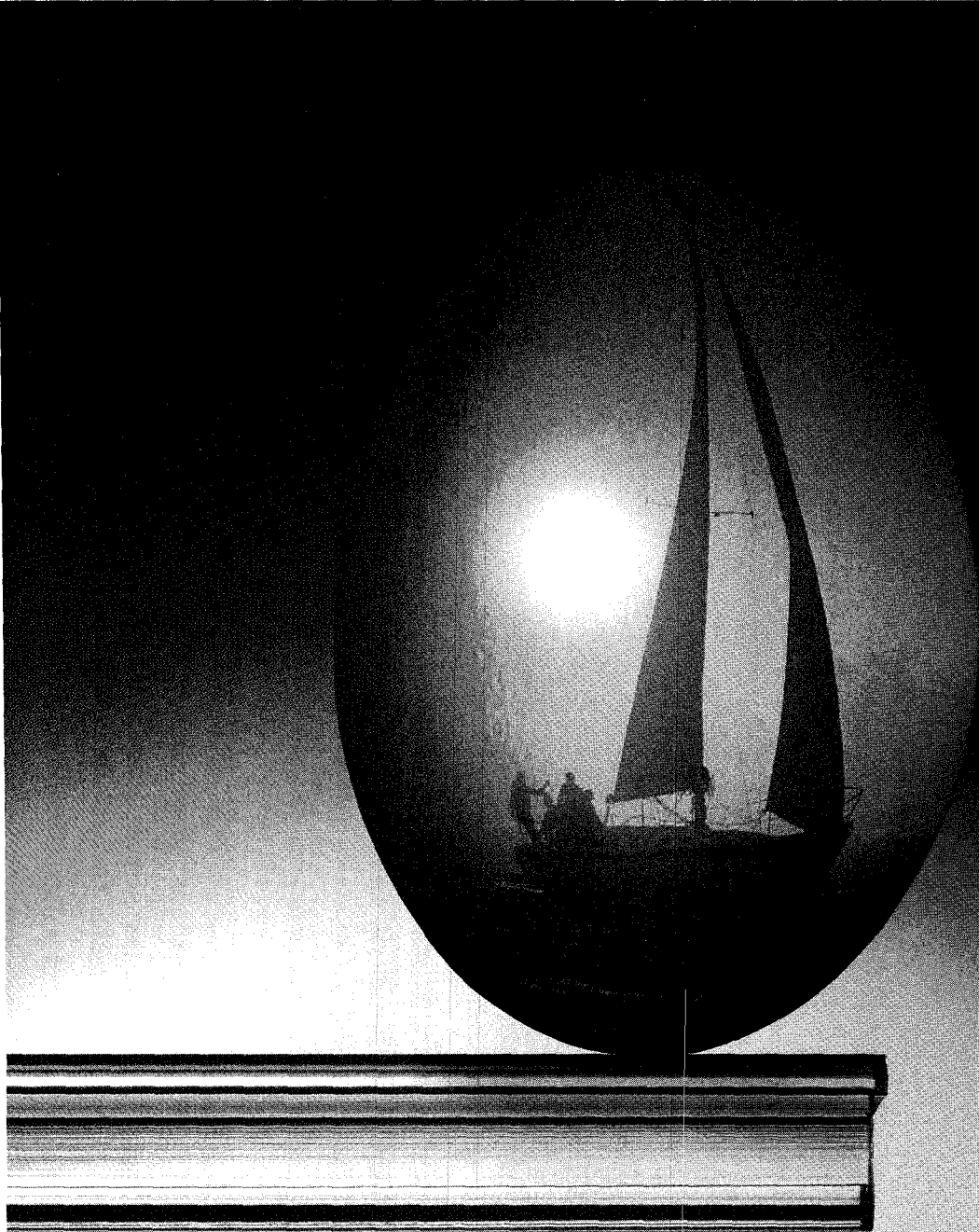
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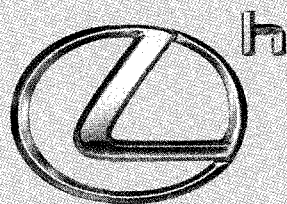
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Interview: Paul Maslin
Paul Maslin, Howard Dean's pollster, talks about *The Front Runner*. Fall, his article on the implosion of the Dean campaign in this issue.

Poetry Pages: Glenn Feldman, Billy Collins, Jane Hirshfield, Ian Cox, Maxine Kumin, and more than a hundred other poets read aloud their poems from *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Interview: Scott Stossel
The Atlantic senior editor Scott Stossel discusses "Killed," his article in this issue, and his new book *Save the Life and Limb of Sergeant Striped*, from which the article is drawn.

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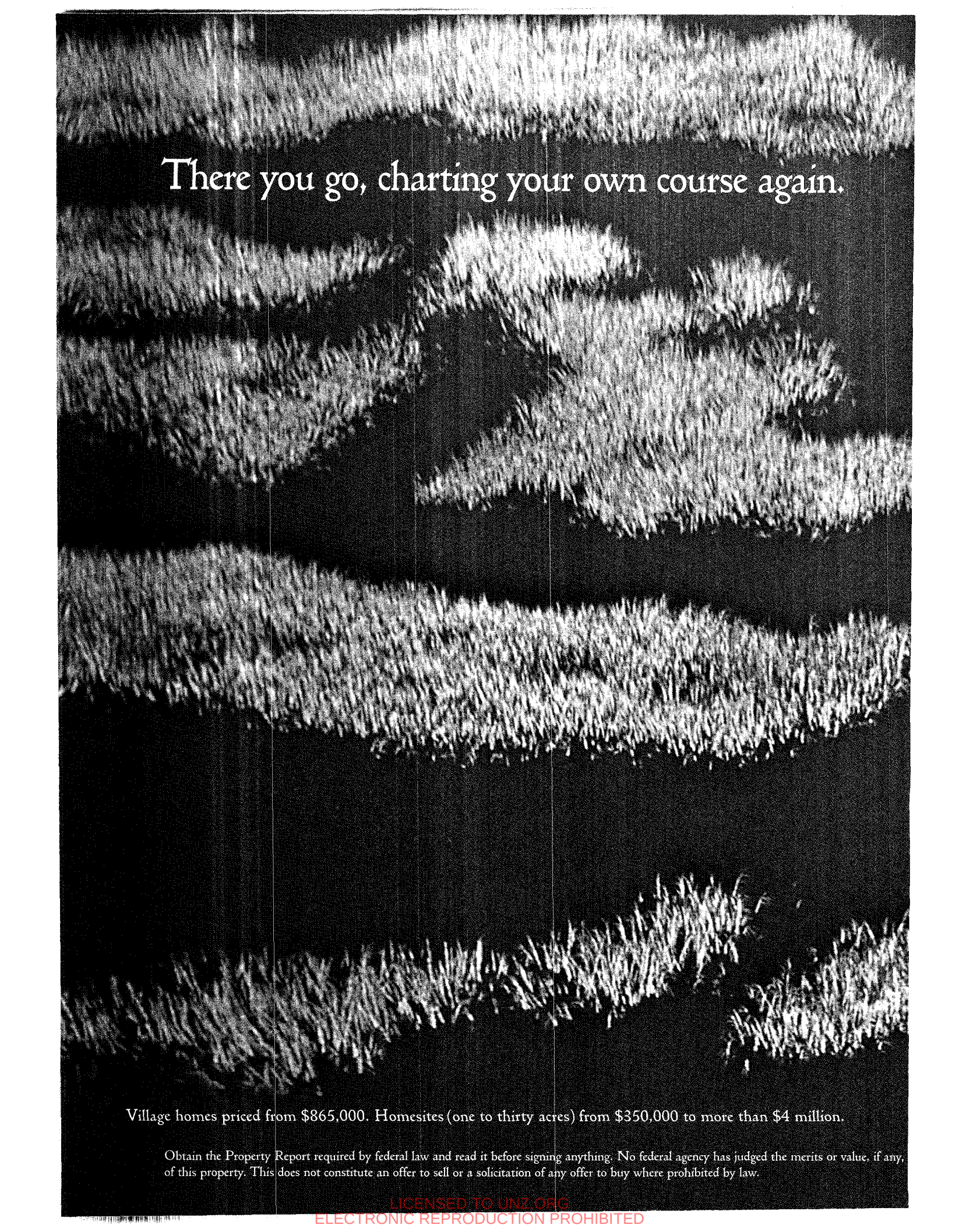
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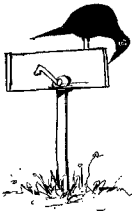
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Nanny Wars

Caitlin Flanagan ("How Serfdom Saved the Women's Movement," March *Atlantic*) flatters me in referring to my book *The Price of Motherhood* as the "Big Kahuna" and the "*Das Kapital* of our working-mother age." But I'm afraid she is the closet Marxist, stirring up class warfare among women. Her piece is one long attack on working mothers, referred to as "professional-class mothers."

She attacks me for not attacking Zoe Baird, the ambitious self-made attorney whose husband failed to pay Social Security taxes for their two household employees. Flanagan says I called this a "civil violation" (as I did, correctly), implying that I should have called for a criminal prosecution, and accuses me of being illogical because I argue that all workers (including mothers at home) should receive Social Security. Never mind that the point of retelling the Zoe Baird story was to show how women shot themselves in the foot by attacking *her* instead of focusing their anger on immigration laws that keep nannies undocumented. The upshot of the Baird affair was to strengthen a system that marginalizes domestic workers and bars countless qualified people—mostly mothers—from judgeships and high office.

In my book I describe how Canada has adopted a reform whereby temporary work permits are issued to foreigners with training in early childhood development or four years of hands-on experience. They must live in, and after two years they may apply for permanent-resident status. This law was made possible by an alliance of affluent two-career couples, organized foreign-born child-care workers, and women's groups.

No such alliance exists in the United States, and no reform is in sight. One

immigration attorney told me that this is because so many American working women feel guilty about hiring a nanny at all. They feel it is "somehow selfish and inappropriate for women to be seeking solutions just for themselves for what many see as a privilege."

In other words, judgmental attitudes like Flanagan's are contributing to the very exploitation of immigrant women that she deplors. We need a cease-fire in the mommy wars and the "nanny wars," and a reminder of the first rule of real war: divided we fall.

*Ann Crittenden
Washington, D.C.*

Caitlin Flanagan's rant would make more sense if it addressed the plight of exploited workers in general—and especially if she could tell us what other jobs Third World women with limited skills can find that pay \$350 a week plus room, board, utilities, health insurance, and Social Security benefits, or that pay \$10 to \$15 an hour on weekends.

*Sarah Armstrong Jones
Los Angeles, Calif.*

Anyone who admits to never having changed a sheet should not presume to expound on those who have changed thousands. Caitlin Flanagan's narrow-minded and self-serving essay was clearly meant to be provocative and splashy, presumably to pave the way for her book in progress on "modern motherhood." She manages to sow dissension among those with common concerns, to demonstrate her lack of historical imagination, and to trash nearly everyone else who has ventured to write on the subject of women vis-à-vis motherhood, housework, and professional aspirations.

Thirtysomething professional women, in Flanagan's view, are guilty of moral turpitude in hiring poor im-

migrant women for housework and child care. Her sharpest barbs, however, are aimed at older feminists (particularly the novelist and activist Alix Kates Shulman), who are guilty of the apparently worse crime of silliness. Their "silliness" consists of the morally irreproachable and perfectly reasonable (if radical at the time) suggestion that men help care for the homes they occupy and the children they father. Except for a mention of Flanagan's husband, who has never changed a sheet either, men are so conspicuously absent from her article that they might as well not exist—a sad commentary on the earlier ideals of equal partnership.

After all of Flanagan's high-handed judgments, her ignorant flaying of young and old alike, and her snide parenthetical jokes, what is her grand conclusion about how to handle the conflicting demands of work, marriage, and child-rearing? Treat our hired help fairly and pay taxes! The feminists of thirty years ago, despite their "silliness," approached the matter with far more complex thought and inventiveness. But it's easier to dodge the hard questions, mock one's peers and elders, pat oneself on the back, gush over one's excellent nanny, and publish a nasty piece of work.

*Lynne Sharon Schwartz
New York, N.Y.*

How does Caitlin Flanagan know that "when a mother works, something is lost" for children? She offers no supporting evidence other than her own experiences growing up with an at-home mom and becoming one herself. Since she is so cutting about the justifications offered by other women, it is surprising she doesn't recognize her own.

*Carly Berwick
Jersey City, N.J.*

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The fact that Caitlin Flanagan has taken her children to eight birthday parties in a month is not, in my view, an example of “the way that adult middle-class life has become so intensely, laughably child-centered.” The very subject of her piece belies this notion and makes it an absurd statement. If legions of women who can afford to raise their own children choose not to do so, and spend the majority of their hours away from their children, what about this is “child-centered”? And furthermore, any society that makes it hard for most middle-class women to find quality day care so that they (out of necessity) can work is also not “child-centered.” I don’t know who this “professional class” is that Flanagan speaks of. Most of the college- (and even graduate-school-) educated women I know are teachers, nurses, musicians, social workers, and entry-level doctors and lawyers with huge school debts. They use a patchwork of home day care, after-school programs, teenagers, and relatives to care for their kids; those boatloads of willing nannies to which Flanagan refers are quite scarce in the heartland of America. Considering the amount of shuttling around many children—rich, poor, and middle-class—do before and after school, I can’t agree that we are as a society “child-centered.” Taking your children to birthday parties on rushed Saturdays when your nanny has her day off does not mean your world revolves around the well-being of your children or your family.

*Elizabeth Weinstein
Tully, N.Y.*

Thank you, Caitlin Flanagan, for the most honest assessment I’ve read of the working-versus-stay-at-home-mom dilemma. I completely agree with Flanagan’s premise that the latest assumption of the feminist movement is “that all working mothers—rich and poor—constitute a single class, that they are all similarly oppressed, and that they are united in a struggle against common difficulties.”

What really amazes me is that according to Flanagan’s article, many upper-middle-class women who choose to work and hire a nanny or send their

child to a day-care center are unwilling to pay a decent wage to the people to whom they entrust the most valuable thing in their lives. How can these women (and their husbands), who so readily spend money on everything else, justify paying so little to the people whom they count on to do so much? In addition to the important ethical considerations of poor women’s watching wealthier women’s children for rock-bottom rates, isn’t it worth paying a few extra dollars for your own peace of mind—to say nothing of your child’s well-being—to ensure that your child has the best possible care? For all these reasons upper-middle-class women should gladly pay a premium for a safe and loving child-care provider, and should consider themselves fortunate that, unlike women who truly need to work, they have child-care choices.

*Christina Gagliano
Melrose, Mass.*

Caitlin Flanagan replies:

Elizabeth Weinstein makes two excellent points. Some professions are not highly compensated. Most of my friends have careers in the same fields as Weinstein’s friends, and for them child care is a similarly expensive scramble. I have noticed that the ones who live in big cities with large immigrant populations use in-home nannies, and the ones who live in places without lots of domestic workers use day care. Stronger still are her observations on my discussion of “child-centered” family life; she’s quite right.

Now let us turn to Ann Crittenden’s letter. It demands to be examined on a point-by-point basis.

1) Crittenden says that my essay is “one long attack on working mothers, referred to as ‘professional-class mothers.’” Wrong. Much of the essay centers on the fundamental distinction between poor working mothers and financially comfortable ones. It points out that feminists are eager to erase this distinction, which is exactly what Crittenden has done in this mischaracterization—one so blatant as to appear willful.

2) Crittenden suggests that I find her argument about Zoe Baird illogical. Quite right. I also find it hypocritical: why is it horribly unjust for the government to deny

at-home moms Social Security set-asides, but only something minor—on a par with getting a parking ticket—if a professional-class woman does the same thing to a poorly paid immigrant nanny?

3) The immigration plan Crittenden proposes: offensive. It is built on the assumption that to facilitate the daily lives of professional-class working mothers, we need an endless supply of poor immigrants to do their housework and child care. But there are plenty of Americans who need work. Why won’t they take the jobs? Because professional-class working mothers have set the pay so low and have so often refused to contribute benefits (such as health care and maternity leave, as well as Social Security set-asides) that Americans don’t want the jobs. Flooding the country with more immigrants would only force wages downward. How much should we pay our nannies? Perhaps we could use a calculation described in The Price of Motherhood. Crittenden tells us that to compensate a professional-class at-home mother for all her labor (the exact labor that nannies provide working mothers), her husband should pay her \$100,000.

4) I challenge Crittenden to highlight and reproduce a single sentence from my essay that supports her claim that “judgmental attitudes like Flanagan’s are contributing to the very exploitation of nannies she deplores.” She may send the sentence to me care of this magazine.

From the comments of Sarah Armstrong Jones we are to infer, I think, that nannies where she lives receive not only Social Security set-asides but also health insurance. In what Valhalla does she dwell? Los Angeles. So do I. I have never met a domestic worker whose employer contributes to a health-insurance plan, and of the many employers of domestic workers I have interviewed, fewer than 20 percent pay Social Security taxes on their employees’ wages.

Lynne Sharon Schwartz says that people who don’t change sheets should not “presume to expound on” those who do. Good thing the abolitionists (many of whom never picked cotton as slaves) didn’t feel that way. My “sharpest barbs” were not reserved for older feminists. Ms. Schwartz may not be an enthusiastic student of the niceties of the English language, but surely she understands that in the lexicon of barbs “silly” is not a particularly stinging entry. Indeed, much of the piece centers on the very ar-

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gument she makes—that second-wave feminists of the seventies grappled with these problems in a much more sophisticated and admirable manner than do contemporary ones. As for my husband's changing sheets—why in the world would I want him to do that? He is the head of the household, and I treat him as such. But I'm not a feminist, so there's no surprise there. The more telling question is why so many feminists, when hiring housekeepers and nannies, exclusively employ females. They seem to assume that women are more suited to such work. I agree with them.

Carly Berwick touchingly demands "supporting evidence" for the simple claim that "when a mother works, something is lost," as though reams of sociological research must be presented if one is to say anything at all about the most essential and enduring of all human relationships, the one between mother and child. For starters, a minimum of forty hours a week of mother-child interaction is lost if the mother works full time. (When you take away the hours that both spend asleep, many professional-class working mothers routinely spend less than an hour a day with their children.)

I was prepared for the anger my essay would prompt in women. I was unprepared for the silence that has ensued on the subject of how professional-class women treat their nannies. It is instructive that the only angry correspondent to address the question of how domestic workers are treated argues that they are actually very well compensated. How droll. Unlike most women, I pay my domestic workers' Social Security taxes. I do it not only because it's the law but also because I feel a moral obligation to the women who work for me. Apparently, if I became a feminist, I would be free to rip them off, pocket my savings, and decry the patriarchy and my own oppression all in one breath. No, thanks.

Blind Into Baghdad

In "Blind Into Baghdad" (January/February *Atlantic*) James Fallows asserts that "sending the Iraqi soldiers home" was a "catastrophic error of commission." Fallows, who is normally a very able and careful reporter, refers to a *Washington Post* story that quotes me, but he did not attempt to talk to me about the issue, and I am therefore tak-

ing this opportunity to comment on what actually happened.

The fundamental problem with the dissolution-as-catastrophe theory is that using the old army was never an option, because that army had ceased to exist, as had its infrastructure. Even if the old army had still existed, there would have been some serious problems, to put it mildly, had Jay Garner or the U.S. military commanders started the effort to rebuild the country by proclaiming that this key element of Saddam's power structure would be a centerpiece of coalition efforts to maintain security. But that is admittedly a matter of judgment, if not a very difficult one.

What is a matter of fact and not of judgment, however, is that using the old army, good idea or bad, was not feasible. The Iraqi soldiers had not been sent home; they had gone on their own. The pre-war studies that Fallows refers to as counseling not to "tear apart the army" had—like most pre-war observers—assumed that the end of the fighting would see large Iraqi army units sitting in intact bases waiting for orders, and at least theoretically available to assist the coalition in the post-conflict phase. Instead, by the time Baghdad and Tikrit fell, in early April, not a single organized Iraqi military unit was still in existence. The old army had simply disintegrated. When Paul Bremer arrived in Baghdad in mid-May and, shortly thereafter, issued an order terminating the formal legal existence of Saddam's defunct military and security apparatus, the old army had already been gone for weeks.

Once this military Humpty-Dumpty had broken itself apart, attempting to reconstitute it, even if that had been a good idea, was totally impractical. At best, a recall effort might have yielded a lot of senior officers eager to reclaim their perks and status. Certainly there were plenty of them. Of the 80,000 officers in the old army, some 11,000 were generals. (The U.S. Army, approximately the same size as the former Iraqi military, has just over 300 generals.)

But a recall effort could not have produced a force of any real use as a security service. Whereas the career officers were overwhelmingly Sunni, the ordi-

nary soldiers were conscripts and overwhelmingly Shia. Enlisted men were held in the ranks only by draconian measures that included cutting off the ears of suspected conscription evaders. With the collapse of Saddam's regime, those conscripts happily returned home to their families. They have welcomed the coalition's formal ending of their obligations, and no significant numbers would have heeded a call to return to the colors under their old officers.

Moreover, even if a few units could somehow have been reassembled, they would not have had what Fallows describes as "a place to go each day," because the soldiers had taken with them virtually everything from their bases and barracks, and what they did not take was stolen or trashed by looters who promptly ransacked the facilities they had abandoned. An army, or any useful security force, needs not just people but equipment and facilities. Putting the least wrecked of the old Iraqi bases into bare-bones shape for the new army has cost several million dollars for each battalion and a couple of months' hard work.

Nor is it the case that, as Fallows claims, military personnel have "no longer had a paycheck" and have become "part of the security threat." Iraqi funds have been used to pay former commissioned and noncommissioned officers a monthly stipend. (The only exceptions are some 8,000 who nominally held military rank but were in fact functionaries in Saddam's security, propaganda, and political organizations or were very high in the Baath Party hierarchy.) These stipends deliberately do not match the opulent bonuses and awards Saddam gave to favored officers, but they have given Iraq's former military professionals a decent if modest income while they make the transition to new careers. The overall result since the payments were announced, in June, has been that although many ex-officers are predictably unhappy at their loss of privilege and profession, they have not as a class been a source of significant peaceful protest or opposition, much less a "part of the security threat."

Walter B. Slocombe
Washington, D.C.

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James Fallows replies:

During much of the time I was interviewing people, mainly face to face and mainly on the East Coast of the United States, Walter Slocombe was in Baghdad. That is why I did not run into him. The reason I didn't seek him out is that my article, unlike some other press reports, did not say that he had personally played a major role in the decision to disband the Iraqi army. Obviously, I went to great lengths to seek out comment from responsible officials in the Pentagon—who, with the notable exception of Douglas Feith, declined to cooperate.

Mr. Slocombe's points here are a longer and more detailed version of what Douglas Feith told me: that the dissolution of the army was a recognition of the messy reality that American occupiers confronted just after the war. The Iraqi army had "already disbanded itself," my article quoted Feith as saying. But as the article also pointed out, that judgment was highly controversial at the time, and has remained so in retrospect. CIA and U.S. Army officials, among others, warned about the effect of the sweeping dissolution order. When all the evidence is in, and historians can assess both the reasons for this decision and its long-term effect, it is possible that they will see it the way Mr. Slocombe does: as the best of a bad set of options. For now, what I said in the article remains true: virtually the only people to say this was a good decision are the ones who made it.

State of the Union

No concept in economics is more deeply and widely misunderstood than the trade deficit. Regrettably, Sherle Schwenninger's "America's 'Suez Moment'" (The State of the Union, January/February *Atlantic*) only confirms this conclusion. Schwenninger commits the common mistake of equating a current-account deficit with debt. They are emphatically not synonymous.

I'm writing this letter on my Sony computer, which I bought outright. I have full, debt-free ownership of the computer; Sony, in return, has \$2,000 in cash. Even if Sony does not spend those dollars on American output during the current period, thereby contributing to the U.S. current-account deficit, debt is created only if Sony

lends those dollars to Americans, chiefly by buying dollar-denominated corporate and government bonds. If, instead, Sony buys shares of stock in American corporations, buys American real estate, or holds those dollars as cash reserves, no American becomes indebted as a result.

Schwenninger overlooks an even deeper fact. Foreigners who earn dollars by selling goods and services to Americans and then invest those dollars in American assets believe that the U.S. economy's prospects are rosy. This is so regardless of whether foreigners' investments in America create debt or not. How many of us rush to buy equity in companies we believe are headed for bankruptcy? How many of us lend money to people and institutions we think cannot pay us back? How many of us hold currencies that we suspect will lose significant value?

The trade deficit is more likely to be evidence of economic health than a cause for concern.

Donald J. Boudreaux
Chairman, Department of Economics
George Mason University
Fairfax, Va.

Sherle Schwenninger writes that China holds more federal debt than any other country. This statement is not consistent with data from the Department of the Treasury. According to Treasury officials, Japan is the largest holder of federal securities, with more than \$500 billion outstanding; China is second, with around \$145 billion outstanding.

Eric Schatten
Bethesda, Md.

In "Radical Tax Reform," Maya MacGuineas states that the question of whether the current tax system is fair may be rephrased as "To what extent is one's overall tax burden commensurate with one's ability to meet it?" Why doesn't she just add "and to each according to his need," and complete the Marxist cliché? I see nothing fair about making taxes progressive. My working life has been shaped by two facts: I spent years without an income preparing myself for the professional career

in which I now work; and I work much longer hours than most people. Do I deserve a higher income than the median? You bet. I make a lot of money for my employer, I give up time I'd much rather be spending with my wife and children, and I think I do something that's socially useful. So why should my income be viewed as fair game by all of society's free riders? In contrast to MacGuineas's conception of fairness, I could make a case that the only fair tax system is a sharply regressive one. That's because I get much less from my government than do people with lower incomes. No food stamps for me. No welfare. No Medicare. No Medicaid. No Section 8 housing vouchers. No drug treatment. Less police and fire protection, too, because my neighbors and I live pretty quiet lives. You get what you pay for, and you pay for what you get. How about that for a guiding principle? Not bloody likely, though. I guess I'll just have to live with the satisfaction of knowing that as I sit in my office at ten o'clock at night, I'm making money for the people at home in front of the TV, having a beer and having the last laugh. It's utterly unfair, and a bad way to run a society that supposedly prizes hard work and self-sacrifice.

*Stewart B. Herman
New York, N.Y.*

"Radical Tax Reform" hit the right notes for those of us who believe the world of taxation is in a fallen condition—one characterized by unfairness, unwillingness to pay for what you bought, and mind-boggling, stupefying complexity. However, although Maya MacGuineas's proposal ploughs interesting new ground, her discussion fails to address the possibility that taxation of wealth could deal directly, fairly, and possibly more simply with these problems.

The logical basis for a wealth tax is that wealth commands, directs, and benefits from the operations and therefore the cost of government. If a single tax rate is applied to wealth, the first requirement—for "fairness"—is met. And the rate of tax paid goes up in direct proportion to the level of wealth.

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My back-of-the-envelope calculations indicate that if personal income were added to personal wealth and taxed at the rate of something near two percent, the revenues produced would permit us to scrap all present taxes on personal income, estates, and dividends; regressive payroll taxes (Medicare, Social Security); and federal excise taxes.

This proposal would undoubtedly finish close to last in a race for politically acceptable and easily implemented solutions, but perhaps it would be among the early finishers in a race for logical and "radical" solutions.

Robert D. Coye
Suttons Bay, Mich.

Maya MacGuineas replies:

Stewart Herman's points are well taken; fair is in the eye of the beholder, and certainly so when it comes to taxes. My preference for progressive taxes (shared by Adam Smith) is no more "right" than his for regressive. I would, however, quibble with his claim about Medicare, since I assume he will accept the benefits that will be offered to him once he is of qualifying age. (And the same goes for Social Security.) Assuming he lives to at least an average age, it is quite likely he will receive far more than he ever paid into the programs, making him one of the many millions who receive "middle-class welfare."

Robert Coye brings up the interesting issue of a single wealth tax—something I certainly see the appeal of and did consider, but ultimately rejected because it would be inconsistent with the need for policies that encourage rather than discourage personal saving. Furthermore, such taxes can be difficult administratively, because they require valuing underlying assets, many of which are not associated with clear market values until they are actually sold. Nonetheless, I like Mr. Coye's grand-scale thinking, which is what I think the current tax debate needs.

Don Peck ("Putting a Value on Health") and Laurie Rubiner ("Insurance Required") propose that we solve the problem of having people without health-care coverage in this country by requiring everyone to buy health insurance, with government subsidies if necessary. I wholehearted-

ly agree with the goal of universal access to health care, but this plan is impractical.

I work in a clinic for the poor and uninsured. I love my patients, but I know that many of them are irresponsible. Many would not buy health insurance even if it were required—just as they drive cars without auto insurance. They would not select a health plan even if it cost them nothing. We frequently encounter children whose parents have not enrolled them in Medicaid, which they could receive free. What are we to do with these people? I doubt we're prepared to jail them for not choosing a health plan, and the idea of fining them is laughable. The defiantly uninsured won't be denied medical care if they turn up in an emergency room. Without penalties we have no way of enforcing a law requiring everyone to have health insurance.

Such a law would be widely evaded by healthy young people as well, even among the prosperous. They seldom need medical attention, and they have an inchoate understanding that their insurance premiums serve mainly to subsidize the care of older, sicker people. Many of them would make an economically rational decision not to spend their money on health insurance even if this were illegal. Without their participation the cost of insurance would rise intolerably, just as it is doing now.

The insurance companies, for their part, would sell basic, mandatory health insurance as long as they could make a profit on it. Each would inevitably find ways to cherry-pick the healthiest patients and deny as many claims as they could. This is maddening, but the insurance companies cannot be faulted for it. That is how they do their job of managing risk for the benefit of their shareholders. When they could no longer profitably sell mandatory health insurance, insurers would stop selling it, regardless of the law. It would be no easier to force them to sell this product than it would be to force people to buy it.

If we want everyone to have basic health-care coverage, and we should, we will simply have to furnish it through a government agency paid for with tax

dollars, much as we do fire protection and public education. Private insurers cannot be relied on to act for the public good, and private individuals cannot be relied on at all.

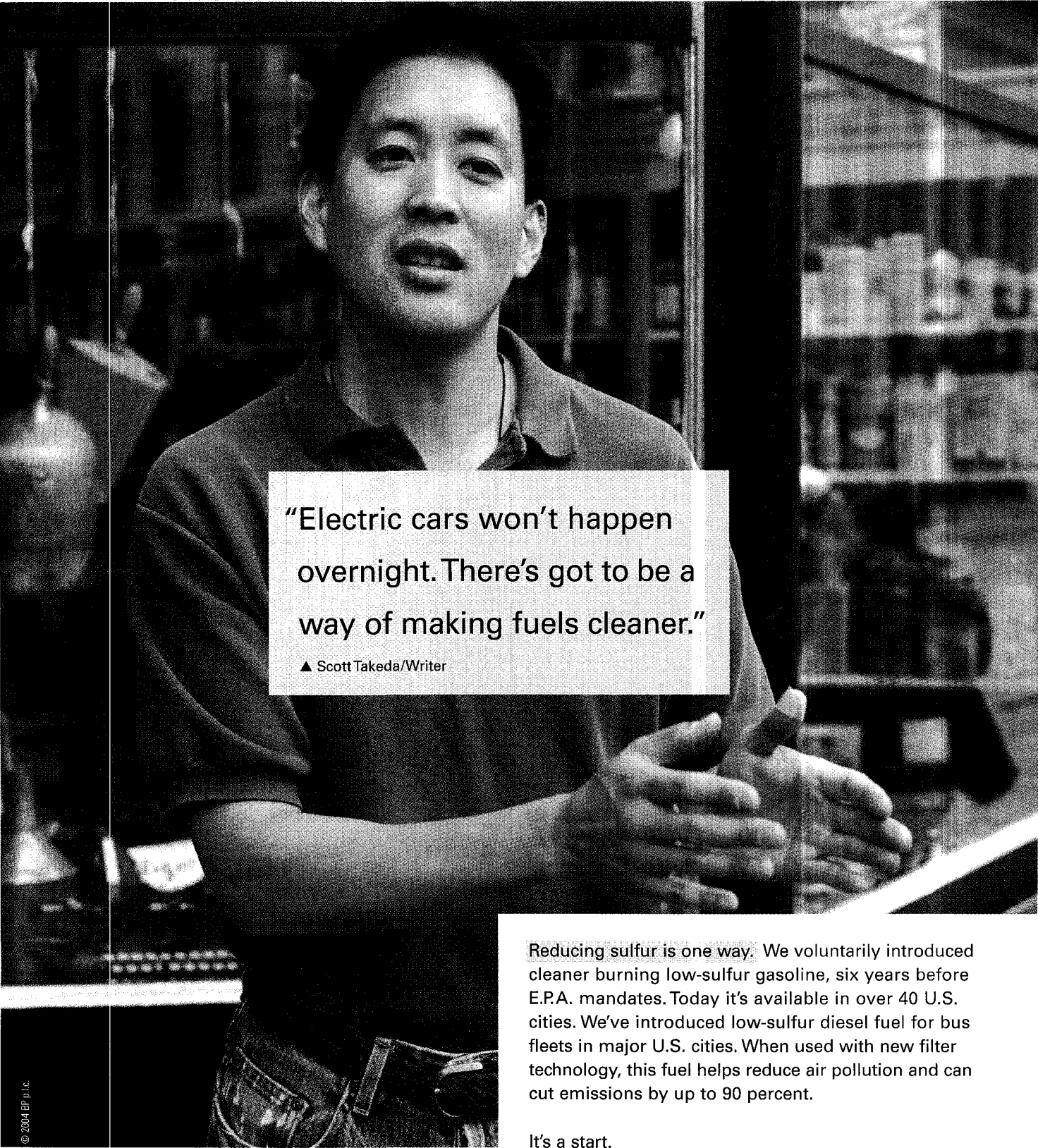
J. Timothy Ames, M.D.
Valparaiso, Ind.

Laurie Rubiner replies:

I take issue with J. Timothy Ames's assertion that the uninsured are simply irresponsible. Eighty-five million people—one third of the non-elderly population—were uninsured at some point between 1996 and 1999. It is difficult to imagine that all these people were uninsured because they are irresponsible. Millions of people eligible for Medicaid are not enrolled because states have failed to develop effective strategies for outreach and enrollment in their publicly funded programs. The large and growing number of people without health insurance, the slow erosion of the employer-based system, and the skyrocketing cost of health care indicate a systemic problem: health insurance is simply unaffordable or unavailable to millions of people. The only viable way to get everyone into the system, and thereby to bring down costs for everyone, is to make health insurance mandatory. A system of mandatory insurance can be enforced in many ways: through default enrollment, for example, or through the tax code. Although some small number of people would undoubtedly try to evade the system, the vast majority of families want affordable, continuous coverage and, I believe, would welcome our universal program.

I enjoyed the long-term perspective in Nathan Littlefield's article on the funding crisis of the U.S. government, "The \$45 Trillion Problem." As a CPA and a benefits administrator, I am appalled at the bad accounting of the federal government that conceals its long-term liabilities. It is also a travesty to use the current Social Security surpluses to mask the size of the current federal deficit.

One of the problems with many tax-reform efforts is that they are too piecemeal; they look at only one tax or one program. I think the only way we will get reform is through a coordinated approach that gores every interest



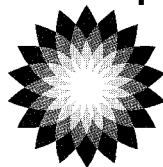
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group's ox, but kills none of them. Each would gain the security of knowing that the government will be there to meet its smaller promises. Following are a few suggestions on which oxen to gore and how deeply.

1) Collect Social Security tax on all earned income. Congress took the first step in this direction by separating the Medicare tax and exempting it from the Social Security cap. Now we need to remove the cap for all of the tax. The current cap shifts the total federal tax burden (income plus Social Security taxes) heavily onto the middle class. A married worker with taxable income between \$46,000 and \$85,000 (the Social Security cap) pays the highest total tax rate. Social Security is a government income-redistribution program, not a pension plan. It adheres to none of the funding or payment requirements of pension plans. All its policies and rates are arbitrary, so why maintain the pension-plan fiction by limiting payments to the plan?

2) Reinstate income tax on dividends. The argument for removing the tax was that it's unfair to tax the same money twice. But earned income is taxed twice—for income tax and for Social Security tax. We cannot afford to let this sizable chunk of income be untaxed. The total burden of the double taxation is less than that on the middle-class worker cited above. Exempting dividends from Social Security tax is enough of a concession.

3) Exempt the first \$5 million from the estate tax. Raising the limit to this level would lessen disruptions for family businesses and farms. However, allowing unlimited transfers perpetuates class differences and increases inequality in our society (and reduces charitable contributions). If earned-income tax rates were less confiscatory (the middle-class worker above pays a marginal federal rate of 40.3 percent on taxable income over \$46,000), I would be less opposed to them. But with this heavy a tax burden, it is difficult for middle-class families to afford the education and investment to move quickly up the income scale, no matter how motivated or talented they are. I would support lowering the estate-tax rate to

25 percent or 30 percent, more in line with current income-tax rates.

4) Levy income tax on all Social Security payments. Persons receiving only Social Security income would pay little, whereas wealthy seniors would pay more. However, their total tax burden would remain much less than workers', since they would not pay Social Security tax.

Gerald E. Hyde
Salt Lake City, Utah

Nathan Littlefield replies:

It's worth noting that one of Gerald Hyde's proposals, extending the payroll tax, would have about four times the impact of taxing all Social Security benefits. Although precise comparisons are tough, the remaining two measures pale in comparison, and all four together would still leave substantial liabilities. Why? It comes down to the overwhelming importance of medical costs to the total imbalance, which has jumped from \$45 trillion to about \$51 trillion in the wake of the recent Medicare bill. "Only" about \$7.5 trillion comes from Social Security, and very little is attributable to the discretionary part of the budget (defense, welfare, education, and so forth), which is funded in part by taxes on personal income. Medicare accounts for the rest, mainly because of increases in medical spending, which has risen rapidly in recent decades and will likely continue to do so far into the future.

I must say that Jennifer Washburn's data in "The Tuition Crunch" cannot be refuted. The cost of attending college has risen dramatically—by 160 percent at public universities since 1975. However, two other calculations, widely ignored by the media, are the number of high school seniors who enroll in four-year degree programs and the number who subsequently graduate.

In 1970, 44 percent of high school seniors went on to college, and half of those graduated four years later. Last year 60 percent of high school seniors went on to college, and only 26 percent of those are expected to graduate in four years. Those who do not graduate will find themselves in debt to the tune of \$11,400 a year (on average) for tuition, room, and board.

And although tuition has risen during this period, the total tuition revenue

collected by colleges and universities has actually decreased as a proportion of overall revenue. In 1919, when data began to be collected, tuition revenue accounted for 21 percent of the total revenue earned by colleges and universities in the United States. This figure had dropped to 18 percent by 1969, and has remained unchanged for the past thirty-five years. Tax dollars filled a portion of this revenue gap in 1919, and by 1969 tax dollars accounted for 50 percent of total college revenue; this percentage, as well, has remained unchanged for the past thirty-five years.

The number of colleges and universities has doubled since World War II. In no other industry has such unchecked growth been so thoroughly subsidized by tax dollars. But the fact of more colleges doesn't mean that the public should be asked to spend more money to keep all of them in the black.

A 26 percent graduation rate is not worth a yearly federal and state investment in higher education of \$112 billion.

P. D. Lesko
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Jennifer Washburn rightly points out that rising tuition costs inhibit poorer students from attaining a bachelor's degree. However, she says little about the more than 1,000 community colleges in which millions of students are enrolled while paying considerably less than they would at public and private four-year colleges. Washburn correctly states that attending a community college does "reduce [students'] chances of attaining a bachelor's degree." We should not, however, underestimate the importance of community colleges' transferring thousands of graduates each year to four-year institutions. The community-college entry point is especially crucial for minority students who might otherwise be excluded from higher education. Since Washburn's ideal is "a highly educated work force," the role of community colleges in preparing graduates for paraprofessional jobs that fuel our "technological edge" should not be neglected. The "technological edge," which Washburn correctly states is "critical," is maintained in no small degree by community-college graduates

who are employed in fields such as information science, engineering technologies, allied health, e-commerce, and public service. All of higher education, the four-year and the two-year sector alike, needs a higher funding priority at the federal and state levels if colleges are to meet American society's future requirements.

Gerald Bazer

Dean of Arts and Sciences (retired)

Owens Community College

Toledo, Ohio

Jennifer Washburn replies:

I thank both P. D. Lesko and Gerald Bazer for their letters. Present college dropout rates are indeed shocking; the only way to truly remedy this problem is to dramatically improve our K-12 education system and the quality of college preparation in high school.

Johnny Cash

Francis Davis, in his splendid appreciation of Johnny Cash ("God's Lonely Man," March *Atlantic*), refers to "The Long Black Veil" as a "traditional ballad." Sorry, but it isn't. The lyrics were written by the Grand Ole Opry veteran Danny Dill for a Lefty Frizzell recording session. The next day—March 3, 1959, to be exact—his co-writer and pianist Marijohn Wilkin wound out a melody on the piano, and they pitched the song to Lefty. He wanted to record it. So, without a demo, Wilkin played piano on a straight "head session"—and the song proved to be the penultimate hit of Lefty's career. By the early 1960s it had been appropriated by folk musicians as a "traditional ballad."

Dave Hill

Minneapolis, Minn.

Francis Davis replies:

Wilkin and Dill apparently hoped to cash in on the folk craze of the late 1950s by writing a song that closely resembled an Appalachian ballad. They were so successful that I and countless others who first heard "The Long Black Veil" in the 1960s, performed by Joan Baez or the Band, reflexively assumed it was, in fact, traditional. My thanks to Dave Hill for correcting my error.

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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, essays on the legendary strategist Bob Shrum, joking one's way into office, and fashion choices in body armor

RYAN LIZZA

"A win for Kerry would bestow on [Bob] Shrum the one thing that separates him from Karl Rove: credit for bringing a President to power."

PAGE 32

MATTHEW QUIRK

The ten largest FCC fines for indecency and obscenity: A List

PAGE 36

JOSHUA GREEN

"The task of jolting life into Kerry with anything less than a defibrillator will fall to his ghostwriters."

PAGE 37

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

"I had reached the stage in life where I needed something that fit right, set the appropriate tone, and was hanging in my own closet ready for use. I am not talking about a tuxedo. I am talking about body armor."

PAGE 40

DIETER WULF

Hitler's "Amerikabomber": A Found Object

PAGE 41

MARK STEYN

"Fly Me to the Moon," the songwriter Bart Howard's one big hit, "served as the soundtrack for the fulfillment of the grandest dream of all"—it was the first song actually played on the moon.

PAGE 42

PRIMARY SOURCES

Recent research suggests that people lie less often in e-mail than when they are face to face or on the phone, because most lies "emerge spontaneously from conversation."

PAGE 44

SUNNY SIDE UP?

Rethinking our political fixation on the bright side of life

BY JONATHAN CHAIT

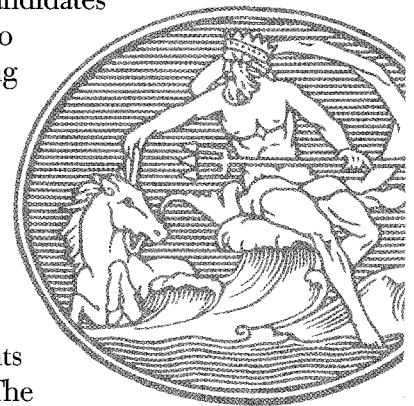
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In February, George W. Bush's campaign manager, Ken Mehlman, previewed the President's re-election strategy. "We're now moving into a phase," he told *The New York Times*, "where we will begin contrasting the President's positive, optimistic vision with the alternative." That alternative would be John Kerry's grave demeanor, which is thought to be his Achilles' heel. The columnist Joe Klein observed in *Time* that Kerry's message "isn't as positive or optimistic as it might be." Thus Bush's strategy of emphasizing the contrast.

Optimism as a political strategy is not confined to incumbents, like Bush, who need to convince voters that things are improving. Nobody donned the mantle of optimism like the Democratic runner-up John Edwards, to whom the word "optimist" clung in nearly every media account, and who went so far as to deliver a speech last year titled "In Defense of Optimism." And Bush, when he ran in 2000, ritually declared, "I'm an optimist." Every four years candidates strive to out-Pollyanna one another, laboring to maintain their smiles, never allowing a sobering thought to cloud their gaze. All this reflects the curious but widely held conviction among those who practice and cover American politics that optimism is a prerequisite for any Oval Office aspirant—almost a matter of patriotism. Americans are thought to be an optimistic people, drawn to soaring ideals and lofty goals. Thus we demand that our Presidents reflect this spirit. As *Time* recently declared, "The more optimistic candidate nearly always wins."

One might immediately notice a causality problem here. Perhaps candidates are winning because they're optimistic—or perhaps they're optimistic because they're winning. Conversely, it's obvious why losers would lack optimism. Imagine that you've spent month upon month trudging to factory gates in the predawn hours, hoping that a few workers will make eye contact with you, or at least won't insult you, as they shuffle past; the evening news reports night after night that the American public sees you as an effete, out-of-touch snob, or a criminal-coddler, or a tool of special interests, or perhaps all these things; and, despite your valiant attempts to communicate your message of hope and change, campaign reporters ask only about your sagging poll numbers.

The best-known empirical basis for the claim that optimists win





elections is a study conducted by Martin Seligman, a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, with his graduate student Harold Zullow. Seligman helped create a system—called “content analysis of verbatim explanations,” or CAVE—to measure the level of optimism in written or spoken statements. In 1987 he and Zullow applied CAVE to every nomination acceptance speech by a major-party candidate since 1948, masking whether the winning or the losing candidate had uttered it. The researchers found that the more optimistic candidate had won every election but one. (The exception was in 1968, when the “Happy Warrior” Hubert H. Humphrey came roaring from behind, only to lose narrowly to Richard Nixon.) They later examined the stump speeches of the 1988 primary candidates and correctly predicted that George Bush and Michael Dukakis would win their parties’ nominations.

This research attracted the attention of *The New York Times*, which asked Seligman and Zullow to predict the winner of the general election. Analyzing the two acceptance speeches, they predicted that Dukakis would win, by six or seven percentage points. Oh, well. (In their own defense, Seligman later wrote in his book *Learned Optimism* that Dukakis had grown substantially more pessimistic throughout the fall, and in October they had predicted that he would lose by nine points.)

So deeply ingrained is this belief in the power of optimism that the press

corps takes it upon itself to act as a kind of national pep squad, praising the most hopeful presidential hopefuls and scolding those who fail to evince the requisite perkiness. As *USA Today* reported last November, “[Howard] Dean is continuing to feed the perception among some voters, campaign strategists and academics that he is angry, edgy and—a cardinal sin in politics—not cheerful.” What makes the game particularly tricky is that the concept has no agreed-on definition. One might think that Dean, with his preposterous insistence that an obscure ex-governor of a tiny hippie state could win the presidency primarily by luring body-pierced youngsters and aging peaceniks to his Web site, would qualify as optimistic bordering on delusional. But journalists and political professionals concurred that Dean would lose on account of his pessimism, which they defined as anger. In contrast, Edwards’s “optimism” derived from his good looks and reluctance to criticize his opponents.

If a candidate’s personality is not sufficiently sunny or inspiring to cause the media to dub him an optimist, his best recourse is simply to dub himself one. Bush is not the first office-seeker to include the line “I’m an optimist” in his stump speech. The Republican candidates Bob Dole and Steve Forbes repeated that formulation endlessly—Dole in his growl, Forbes pressing his sonorous monotone through pursed lips. Republicans are especially eager to embrace the term, because it has a particular meaning within the conservative subculture: it signals fealty to Reaganism—not just the Cipper’s sunny outlook but his ideology as well, particularly supply-side economics. The former *Wall Street Journal* editor and devout supply-sider Robert Bartley described himself as an optimist, and when he died the many tributes to him invariably echoed the description. To an outsider, this would seem curious, because Bartley was a hysteric, famously given to printing black-bordered editorials with headlines like “THE DEATH OF REASON” (in response to the imposition of a

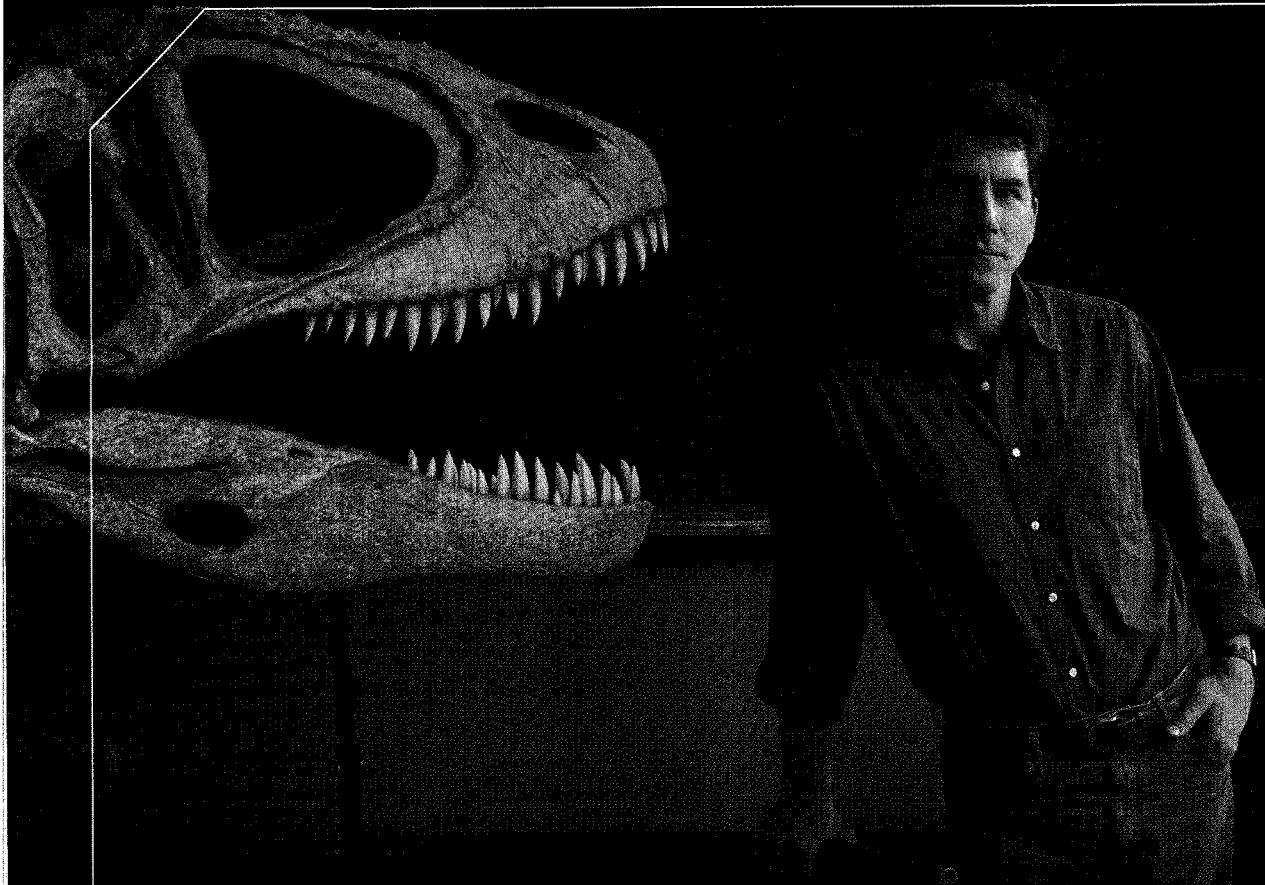
windfall-profits tax), or predicting that the Clinton economic plan would bring utter ruin. But to his fellow believers, this ideological code word made perfect sense. For people like Bartley and Forbes, “optimism” means believing pseudo-economic hokum—principally the notion that enormous tax cuts won’t produce budget deficits.

Perhaps the more interesting assumption is that there’s something inherently virtuous about optimism. The idea of an optimistic President conjures up all sorts of positive images—Franklin Roosevelt offering hope during the Depression, John F. Kennedy exhorting his countrymen to put a man on the moon, Ronald Reagan urging Mikhail Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall. Edwards offered the most explicit moral rationale for optimism when he argued, “Cynics didn’t build this country. Optimists built this country.” As a matter of fact, the Founding Fathers had a deeply pessimistic view of both the public and its prospective leaders, which is why they constructed an elaborate system to prevent not only traditional tyranny but popular tyranny as well. If the people could be trusted to elect saints, we wouldn’t need checks and balances, judicial review, bicameral legislatures, and so on.

True, some of our most revered leaders have been optimists. But optimism has also brought us many of history’s monsters. The Crusades, Mao’s ruinous Great Leap Forward, Napoleon’s disastrous invasion of Russia—these could have been prevented by a bit less optimism. Last January, when President Bush proposed a mind-bogglingly expensive, scientifically dubious moon station and a trip to Mars, Newt Gingrich admonished critics thus: “Those who jump up and down and say, ‘Don’t go to the moon, don’t go to Mars’ have a hard argument, because they are up against 250 years of optimism in American history.” I had never really thought of American destiny as a succession of crackpot schemes foisted on the populace for partisan expediency. But then, maybe I’m just an optimist. ■

Jonathan Chait is a senior editor at *The New Republic*.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BARRY BLITT



Paleontologist Paul Sereno has encountered some of the weirdest creatures that ever walked the earth. Yet some of the scariest things he's discovered aren't likely to become extinct anytime soon. Sad to say, investment fees and expenses will probably outlast us all. That's why Dr. Sereno **was afraid of getting eaten alive.** So he turned to a company famous for keeping costs down. That meant more money for him and less for the monsters.

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KERRY'S CONSIGLIERE

For the legendary strategist Bob Shrum, a lifetime in Democratic politics comes down to John Kerry and a final shot at the White House

Bob Shrum was only thirty-two years old when he first caused a stir in a Democratic campaign. The year was 1976, and the young speechwriter, a former collegiate debating champion who already had a reputation as a brilliant wordsmith, marched into a Philadelphia hotel and left a theatrical resignation letter in the mailboxes of two senior aides to Jimmy Carter. "Governor Carter," he had written in disgust, "I have decided that in light of my own convictions and in fairness to you, I should leave the campaign without delay." Shrum had worked for Carter for exactly nine days.

It seemed an inexplicable act of political suicide for someone on the brink of fulfilling a dream. Shrum had been addicted to politics since age nine, and as a teenager admired John F. Kennedy's legendary speechwriter, Ted Sorensen. "I wanted and worked," Shrum once wrote, "to become whatever title it was in the White House ... that means advising and verbalizing for a President." He had tried twice in 1972—first with Edmund Muskie, whose presidential campaign imploded, and then with George McGovern, for whom he scripted the convention address "Come Home, America"—an eloquent isolationist plea that excited liberals with its urgent call for Americans to turn inward and tackle domestic problems. But McGovern lost forty-nine states to Richard Nixon.

Carter was Shrum's third try. Shrum's purist liberalism—and flair for drama—ended it. Carter, he had come to believe, wanted to increase defense spending, would not divert highway funds to mass transit, and opposed better benefits for victims of black-lung disease. Perhaps worst of all, he had mocked Shrum's revered McGovern. While his Democratic peers scrambled to join the campaign, Shrum was preparing to jump ship. "I am not sure what you truly believe in, other than yourself," he lectured the future Presi-

dent, according to a richly detailed account in Jules Witcover's *Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency 1972–1976*. "I have examined my reactions closely. I have attempted to justify a different conclusion. But I cannot rationalize one." The very day Shrum left the campaign, Carter won the Pennsylvania primary, cinching the nomination.

BRIEF LIVES

**RYAN
LIZZA**

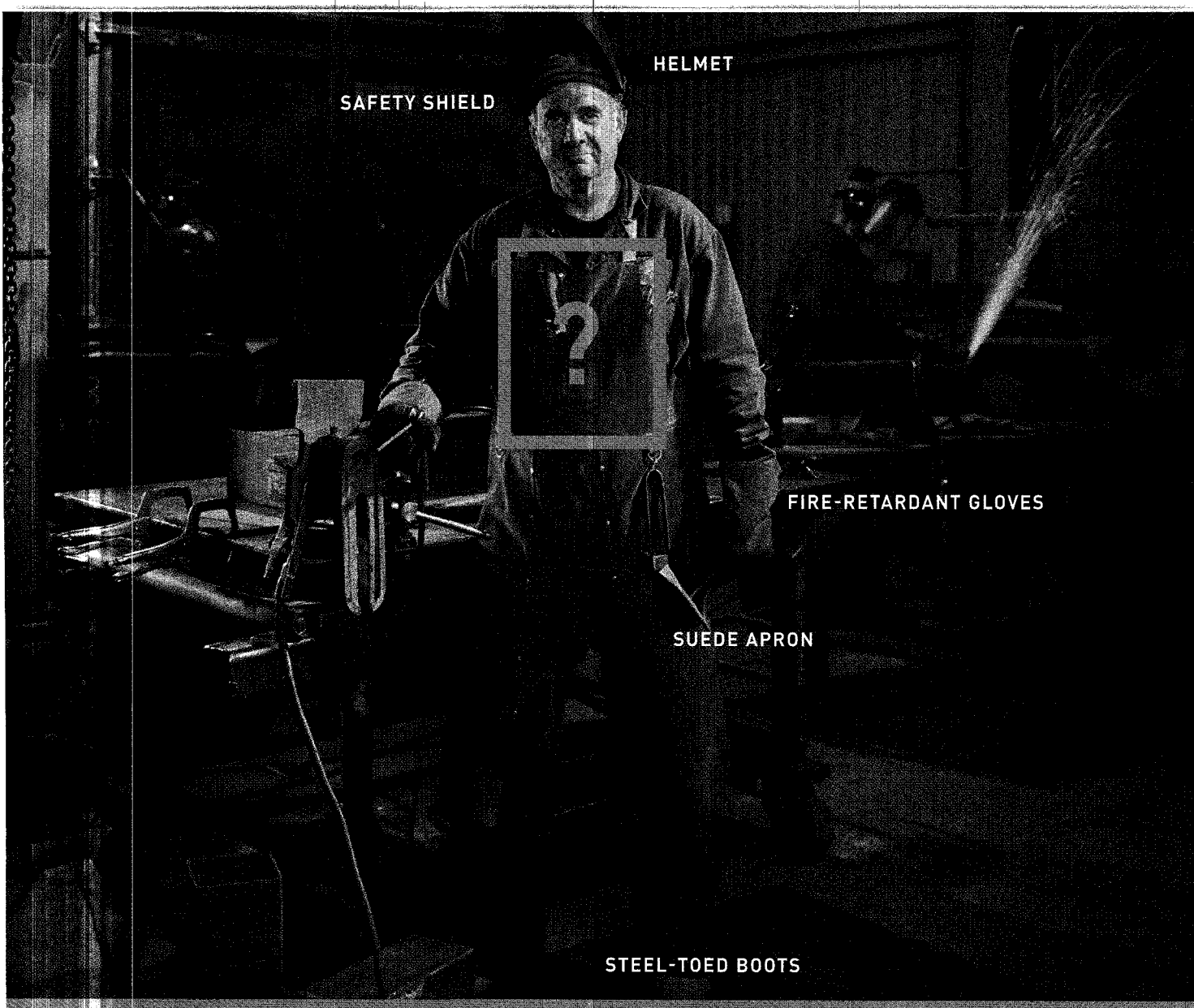
Shrum never wielded the power he yearned for in the White House. But his influence has nonetheless proved mighty; over the next three decades it was he—and not Carter—who became a primary shaper of the Democratic Party. More than any other figure, Shrum has crafted the populist philosophy that for two decades has been the hallmark of Democratic politics: the belief that "powerful forces" stand in the way of progress for average Americans, and that Democrats are the only agents of change who will fight to restore balance and fairness. It has become one of the most potent and oft-used strains of Democratic rhetoric, famously echoed in Al Gore's 2000 campaign pledge to fight in behalf of "the people, not the powerful" against the "special interests."

Over the years, Shrum has become the most sought-after consultant in Democratic politics. He has helped to elect numerous governors and congressmen. Nearly a third of the Democrats in the Senate won their jobs with his help. He has ghostwritten many of the most significant speeches of the past decades, earning him a reputation as what one Clinton veteran calls the "dean of Democratic speechwriters." Shrum is so powerful that he sometimes eclipses the very politicians who are his clients. Every four years presidential hopefuls compete in what has become known as "The Shrum Primary" for the honor of hiring him. Last year John Edwards seemed to have won—until, in February, John Kerry wooed Shrum away. Today he finds himself in a situation almost identical to the one he

faced in 1976. His candidate is again within reach of the presidency. Only this time even Shrum must recognize the significance. One victory has eluded him throughout his storied career, ever since his early exit from Carter's campaign: Shrum has never worked on a *winning* presidential campaign. Kerry's improbable rise has given him one more chance.

As recently as early January, Kerry's chance of winning the Democratic nomination appeared doomed, and with it Shrum's shot at the White House. The early front-runner, Kerry was languishing in the polls. But then came the stunning resurrection and victory in the Iowa caucuses. That night, as Kerry's campaign plane headed for New Hampshire, I watched Shrum bound down the aisle with all the enthusiasm that his youthful self might have displayed. There was, however, no mistaking which was which. Shrum is now bald, heavier, and, like every campaign veteran, marked by the ravages of time and stress. Despite his populist convictions, Shrum dresses impeccably, in well-tailored suits and fine leather shoes. He *looks* like a special interest—or, rather, a caricature of one by the nineteenth-century political cartoonist Thomas Nast. In contrast to the chunky parkas of the Iowans he had just won over, Shrum wore a tan overcoat of lush wool.

Shrum's passion for campaigns seems not to have diminished over time. Beaming, he bypassed the seats reserved for senior campaign aides and joined the press hacks in the rear of the plane. A few weeks earlier not a single reporter would have predicted Kerry's come-from-behind victory. Shrum had counseled Kerry to remain above the fray as his opponents destroyed one another. Other aides had privately scoffed at this advice as Kerry sank in the polls. But Shrum was now vindicated. He went straight for the *New York Post's* Deborah Orin, one of Kerry's toughest critics, and plopped down. "Do I feel



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USES OF ZOCOR

ZOCOR is a prescription drug that is indicated as an addition to diet for many patients with high cholesterol. For patients at high risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) because of existing heart disease, diabetes, vascular disease, or history of stroke, ZOCOR is indicated along with diet to reduce the risk of death by reducing coronary death; reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke; and reduce the need for revascularization procedures.

WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED

Some people should not take ZOCOR. Discuss this with your doctor.

ZOCOR should not be used by patients who are allergic to any of its ingredients. In addition to the active ingredient simvastatin, each tablet contains the following inactive ingredients: cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, iron oxides, talc, titanium dioxide, and starch. Butylated hydroxyanisole is added as a preservative.

Patients with liver problems: ZOCOR should not be used by patients with active liver disease or repeated blood test results indicating possible liver problems. (See WARNINGS.)

Women who are or may become pregnant: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus. **Women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely that they will become pregnant.** If a woman does become pregnant while on ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once.

Women who are breast-feeding should not take ZOCOR.

WARNINGS

Muscle: Tell your doctor right away if you experience any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness at any time during treatment with ZOCOR so your doctor can decide if ZOCOR should be stopped. Some patients may have muscle pain or weakness while taking ZOCOR. Rarely, this can include muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage. The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients taking certain other drugs along with ZOCOR:

- Cyclosporine, itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, HIV protease inhibitors, the antidepressant nefazodone, or large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily), particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Gemfibrozil particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Other lipid lowering drugs (other fibrates or ≥ 1 g/day of niacin) that can cause myopathy when given alone.
- Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

The dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily in patients receiving gemfibrozil. The combined use of ZOCOR and gemfibrozil should be avoided, unless your doctor determines that the benefits outweigh the increased risks of muscle problems. Caution should be used when using ZOCOR with other fibrates or niacin because these can cause muscle problems when taken alone.

No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine.

The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of some liver enzymes. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and thereafter when clinically indicated. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months and periodically thereafter (eg, semiannually) for the first year of treatment. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors

who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR[®] (simvastatin). ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by gemfibrozil and to a lesser extent other fibrates and niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥ 1 g/day).

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations or of damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 10 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range. Of the 7 cases of myopathy/rhabdomyolysis among 10,269 patients on ZOCOR in another study, 4 were aged 65 or more (at baseline), 1 of whom was over 75.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In 2 large, 5-year studies, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychic disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems); or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.



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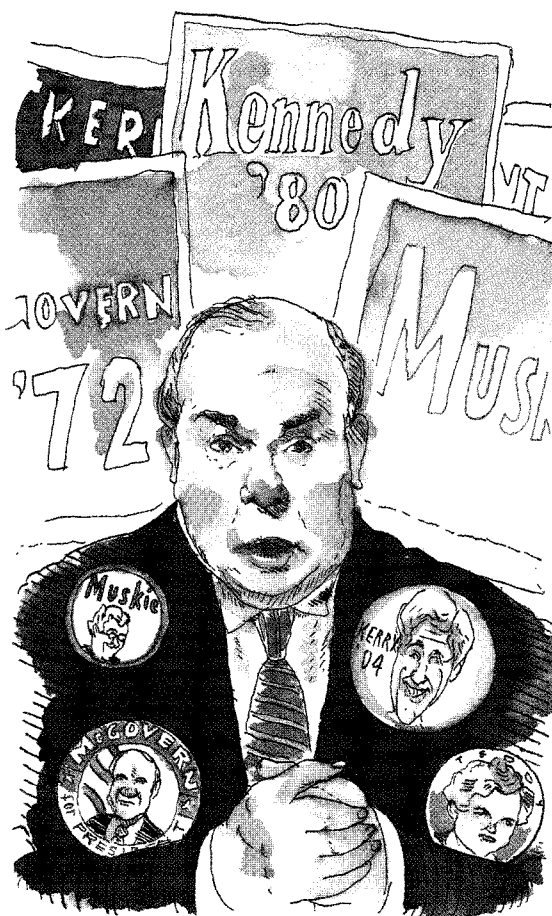
good?" he mused. "I feel really good. I started telling people two weeks ago, but nobody believed me ..."

Thus does Shrum's legacy endure. As anyone who has worked closely with him or covered one of his campaigns can attest, his political skills are not limited to winning elections. Kerry's campaign offers just the latest example of his Rumsfeld-like mastery of bureaucratic maneuvering. "He is a savage infighter," one friend explains—skilled at conquering rivals within a campaign and consolidating power by taking his arguments directly to the candidate. Last fall aides who had prepared a speech to launch the campaign were stunned to learn that Shrum had materialized at Kerry's Boston home and stayed up with him through the night, rewriting it to his own liking. "He plays 'capture the candidate' better than anyone," a former Kerry aide says.

Not surprisingly, Shrum has attracted more than his share of enemies, whose criticism is startling even by Washington standards. "He wreaks havoc in campaigns," says a senior Gore aide who clashed with him in 2000. Yet despite Shrum's reputation for being quarrelsome, disruptive, and prone to tantrums, Kerry eagerly enticed him to join the campaign. As a close friend of Shrum's counters when asked about the trail of invective that follows the consultant, "Why is it that almost every major candidate for the Democratic nomination since 1972 has wanted Bob Shrum to work for them? ... These are not dumb people." The Democratic strategist James Carville, who has worked with Shrum on five campaigns, adds, "I think he's getting a really bad rap."

Nevertheless, all the controversy has lately begun to catch up with Shrum—and not all of it is about his personality. At issue is whether he is as valuable as he is reputed to be or whether his populist message has become shopworn and ineffective. As far back as 1980 *The Washington Post* pointed out how often

he failed: "Friends of Shrum's joke that he's had so many losers that he wouldn't know what to do with a winner." That year he was Ted Kennedy's chief speechwriter when the senator challenged Shrum's old ideological bête noire, Jimmy Carter. But Kennedy lost. By 1988 Shrum, now a full-service consultant, had graduated to Mario Cuomo, who never ran, and then signed on with Richard Gephardt in the primaries.



Gephardt lost too. Shrum wound up working for Michael Dukakis's ill-fated general-election campaign. In 1992 his horse was Bob Kerrey. But Kerrey soon bowed out, and Shrum never managed to penetrate Bill Clinton's inner circle. In 2000 he was one of Al Gore's top advisers, with all-too-familiar results. At one point Shrum even attended a strategy meeting for the ultimate losing candidate, New Coke.

Throughout his professional rise,

Shrum's political message has remained constant. Therein lies a source of criticism. In the death throes of his 1988 campaign Dukakis adopted Shrum's populist rhetoric. Four years later Bob Kerrey did too. An advocate of free trade, Kerrey even permitted himself to be portrayed in a corny commercial as a hockey goalie ("Fight back, America!") to illustrate how he would protect American markets from Japanese im-

ports. A look back at Shrum's clients quickly becomes a pugilistic blur: Jon Corzine ("fighting for us"), Michael Coles ("a fighter for Georgia"), Geraldine Ferraro ("a fighter who's taken on the big insurance companies"), Ron Klink ("strong enough to fight for us"), Bob Casey ("a proven fighter" who "had the courage to take on the most powerful forces"), Kathleen Kennedy Townsend ("fighting for Maryland's families"), Mark Dayton ("fighting for what's right, fighting for you"). After Al Gore struck the same note in the 2000 Democratic primaries (promising to "stay and fight") and then lost the election, Shrum was criticized, both for imposing a populist message on a candidate ill suited to deliver it and for failing to champion the economic success that was the clear legacy of the Clinton-Gore years.

Shrum remains undeterred. Though John Kerry is perhaps even unlikely than Gore as a figure to deliver the message, his campaign is suffused by populist themes. "I'm a fighter," Kerry roared to the crowd on the night he effectively secured the nomination. The newly minted nominee promised to attack "the powerful forces that want America to continue on exactly the path that it's on today." This time Shrum stood with the candidate.

AIR POLLUTION

FCC fines for indecency and obscenity

In the wake of "Nipplegate"—the infamous Super Bowl halftime show in which Janet Jackson's breast was exposed—the Federal Communications Commission has very pushily pursued a crusade against broadcast indecency. But behind the scenes the FCC has been on the lookout all along. The task of policing the airwaves lies with its Enforcement Bureau, created in 1999 to centralize investigations of "obscenity" and "indecency." To fine a broadcaster, the FCC must complete an "indecency analysis" that considers whether material is explicit; whether it is repeated or dwelled on at length; and whether it is pandering, titillating, or shocking. Here are the cases that, according to published documents, resulted in the ten largest fines the FCC has levied since 1999. —MATTHEW QUIRK



1. *Bubba the Love Sponge* and Clear Channel Communications, for segments featuring conversations about "oral sex, penises, testicles, masturbation, intercourse, orgasms, and breasts." The commission singled out as "calculated and callous" a segment featuring impersonations of the cartoon characters George Jetson, Fat Albert, Alvin the Chipmunk, and Scooby-Doo and Shaggy. Clear Channel was fined for twenty-six incidents and four technical violations, and threatened with license revocation. The Love Sponge was fired. Total fine: \$755,000.
2. *Opie & Anthony*, WNEW of New York, and Infinity Broadcasting, for a contest that awarded points for performing sex acts in public places. "Spotters" trailed couples to New York City locations (Saint Patrick's Cathedral, a zoo, FAO Schwarz), tabulated scores, and provided play-by-play description. The station was cited for thirteen indecency violations and threatened with the loss of its license. Total fine: \$357,500.
3. *Elliot in the Morning*, WWDC of Washington, D.C., and AMFM Radio Licenses. To win a competition to cage-dance at a Kid Rock concert, two sixteen-year-old girls discussed sex acts in the hallways, stairwells, and closets of Bishop Denis J. O'Connell High School. Two indecency violations. Total fine: \$55,000.
4. *Mancow's Morning Madhouse*, WKQX of Chicago, and Emmis Radio License, for skits in which women—singly or gathered in Mancow's "lava lamp love lounge"—described and participated in sexual activities. Six incidents. Total fine: \$42,000.
5. *KRON 4 Morning News*, KRON-TV of San Francisco, and Young Broadcasting. Cast members from the *Puppetry of the Penis* show "appeared in capes but were otherwise naked." One exposed himself while performing "genital origami"—manipulating his genitalia to resemble "objects, architecture, and people," including the Eiffel Tower and a baby kangaroo. Total fine: \$27,500.
6. *The Deminski & Doyle Show*, WKRK of Detroit, and Infinity Broadcasting. Hosts asked callers to describe "explicit and graphic" sexual practices. Total fine: \$27,500.
7. Edmund Dinis and WJFD of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Callers to a Spanish-language program told dirty jokes about anal and oral sex, excretory activities, sexual intercourse with a child present, and Fidel Castro. Total fine: \$22,400.
8. *Opie & Anthony*, WNEW, and Infinity Broadcasting, for incidents including a graphic song about a father's having oral sex with his daughter. Total fine: \$21,000.
9. *No te Duermas*, WKAQ of Puerto Rico, and Telemundo, for one skit featuring a couple apparently engaged in oral sex, and another in which a woman lectures about sex toys. The FCC deemed the latter "not a clinical discussion" based on the way "she is carried off by two male models" at the segment's end. Total fine: \$21,000.
10. *El vacilón de la Mañana*, WCOM of Puerto Rico, and WLDI, Inc., for strong sexual innuendo in the morning weather report, among other things. Total fine: \$21,000.

Matthew Quirk is an editorial researcher at The Atlantic.

Shrum, now sixty, has survived to make another run at the White House in part because he has tempered his youthful idealism (among Kerry's least attractive characteristics is a penchant for political opportunism that the younger Shrum would not have abided). Now, despite the chaos that accompanies him, and questions about the viability of his candidate and his message, Shrum finally appears poised to carry through.

In November he emerged as the dominant power in the campaign after an internal struggle led to the departure of Kerry's campaign manager, Jim Jordan. Shrum can expect to exert the leverage over Kerry that he lacked during his short tenure with Carter—aides whisper that the nominee talks to Shrum more than to anyone but his wife. The two already have a bond of trust, because Shrum rejuvenated Kerry's imperiled 1996 Senate campaign. "When you've gone through a near-death experience, you tend to hold on to those who helped get you through those moments," says Jim Margolis, who produces Kerry's television ads with Shrum. Another colleague adds, "To the extent that there is a Karl Rove in this operation, Karl is named Bob."

What is perhaps most fascinating about the coming election is that Shrum's trademark populism, which seemed so discordant just two years ago, will suddenly have renewed resonance. With much of the country passionately aligned against President Bush, the consummate Shrum villain if ever there was one, the sociological and political landscape may at last be hospitable to the consultant's steadfast world view. And a win for Kerry would bestow on Shrum the one thing that separates him from Karl Rove: credit for bringing a President to power.

If, however, Kerry loses, he will become the second patrician Democrat in two presidential elections to do so on populist themes of economic and class warfare. It's hard to see how Shrum's outsize reputation—and by extension the current direction of the Democratic Party—could possibly remain intact. **A**

Ryan Lizza is an associate editor at The New Republic.

FUNNY BUSINESS

When you're running for President, humor is no laughing matter

As the newly anointed Democratic nominee, John Kerry is being scrutinized as never before. Republicans labor to portray him as too liberal, too weak, and too out of touch with "mainstream America" to be President—too much like the last nominee from Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis. Kerry's record on everything from Social Security to the war in Iraq is rightly debatable, but on one issue the facts are quite clear: in an age when voters prefer politicians to be funny and likable, John Kerry is neither. Here the dreaded Dukakis comparison may stick.

In the past this would not have mattered. As Presidents from Calvin Coolidge to George H.W. Bush attest, until recently a wan parliamentarian could reasonably entertain hopes of the presidency. But over the past decade the popularity of late-night comedy programs and daytime talk shows has added to the list of necessary credentials the ability to appear warm and funny on television. Although candidates have favored such appearances at least since Richard Nixon's 1968 cameo on *Laugh-In*, most observers trace this development to candidate Bill Clinton's 1992 saxophone performance on *The Arsenio Hall Show*, which came to symbolize his differences in personality and style from the first President Bush. Comedy shows have since become a political rite of passage. A recent Pew Research Center study concluded that they are "increasingly becoming regular sources of news for younger Americans, and are beginning to rival mainstream news outlets."

To politicians generally, but especially to those viewed as distant or aloof, this is a fraught development, because success in virtually every facet of their job depends on decorum, discretion, and a rigorous lack of spontaneity—traits that leave them ill equipped to be funny. "What's inter-

esting and disheartening," says Ben Karlin, an executive producer of Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*, "is that politicians are the most stage-managed and image-conscious guests we see, even more so than actors and celebrities. They're trained to exhibit a certain range of behaviors: serious, compassionate, practical. Comedy isn't one of them."

POLITICS
JOSHUA GREEN

In practical terms being funny can pose a challenge on a par with some of the knottier policy issues a candidate might encounter. And so, as they would on an important policy matter, politicians of both parties rely on expert advisers—in this case the network of comedy writers in Washington and Hollywood, who collectively account for most of what politicians utter that is funny. Just as with lobbyists and government officials, there is a continual cross-pollination of political consultants and professional joke writers—people like Jon Macks, who managed Democratic campaigns before leaving to write for Jay Leno on *The Tonight Show* (he still writes occasional remarks for politicians), and Phil Rosenthal, the creator of the sitcom *Everybody Loves Raymond*, who scripted some of Bill Clinton's funniest moments.

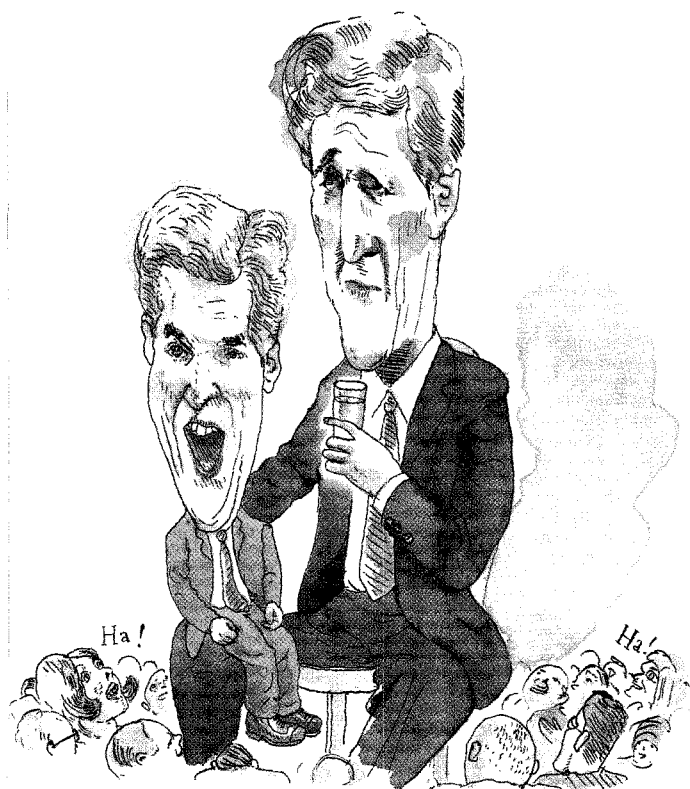
In political Washington, where appearance matters above all else, the desire to display a polished wit is nearly universal, extending even to mundane private-sector types such as lobbyists and trade-association chairs. Tales abound of heated competition to secure the best writers for important humor events such as the annual Gridiron Club dinner and the White House Correspondents' Dinner, and also of the grim sense of purpose many top names apply to mastering the task of delivering jokes. No one betrays any awareness of irony in all this. As Jeff Nussbaum, a rising star among Democratic speechwriters, explains, "In Washington there is no more serious business than being funny."

Perhaps only in the annals of political comedy does Michael Dukakis loom as a larger-than-life figure. Renowned among joke writers as the least intentionally funny politician in memory, he offers an object lesson in the danger of ignoring one's public persona. Dukakis believed that humor had little relevance to politics. Mark Katz, whose new memoir, *Clinton & Me*, chronicles his time as a political humorist, began by writing jokes for Dukakis's 1988 presidential campaign—a job, he says, that was analogous to being staff photographer for *The Wall Street Journal*. Recent political history offers a procession of other humorless automatons who crashed at least in part because voters deemed them too dull, stiff, or creepy: Phil Gramm, Steve Forbes, Al Gore, and Gray Davis come to mind.

Actual political humor—that is, humor delivered by politicians—is tricky, owing not just to politicians' natural handicaps but also to the delicate matter of what can and cannot be said. For although much of what's funny derives from its unexpectedness, there is always the risk of offending key constituencies.

"The biggest challenge in writing humor," says Kenneth Baer, a former speechwriter for Gore, "is, everything that's very funny, you can't make a joke about. Scandals, sex, sleaze—it's all off limits." In the words of the Gridiron Club, which has hosted Presidents since Benjamin Harrison, humor should "sing but not burn."

For politicians to succeed, humor must also be carefully calibrated to humanize them, which means that it must almost always be self-deprecating. "Humor has to flow upward," Jon Macks explains. "It's okay to make fun of your boss, but if you're the guy on top, it's not okay to make jokes about people beneath you, because you look mean—which means your jokes have to come at your own expense." John Edwards, needled for his boyish good looks, has succeeded with this ("I know what you're thinking: 'He's even better-



looking in person"); as a candidate and as President, George W. Bush, for whom self-deprecation is hardly an impulse, has also submitted to necessity (quoting Garrison Keillor's crack that "George Bush's lips are where words go to die"). Yet some of the most talented politicians—most famously, the Clintons—bridle at being the target of their own jokes, to the frustration of Katz and the assortment of other comedy writers who supply them. (In fairness, the Clintons may believe that enough jokes come at their expense already: a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs determined that over a ten-year period encompassing all of his presidency, Bill Clinton was the subject of 3,722 jokes on *The Tonight Show* alone, more than any other figure.)

Kerry's penchant for oratory and statesmanlike posturing would seem to make him Dukakis's heir apparent. Though he has had material provided to him by a former writer for the comedian Bill Maher, and now draws on a phalanx of sitcom writers, little evidence of their handiwork has manifested itself. The trouble for Kerry is that the road to the White House runs through the gauntlet of late-night shows, which presents an opportunity—"If you're going to beat back the charge that you're aloof, here's

the perfect venue to do it," Baer says—but also a risk. During the primaries Kerry's lack of humor didn't hurt him; his vaunted "electability" was enough to draw the support of Democrats eager to depose President Bush. But now he faces the considerable task of wooing the center—voters who by definition are not slavering to remove Bush—and this means displaying the warm and funny side that he has assiduously hidden throughout his public career.

The task of jolting life into Kerry with anything less than a defibrillator will fall to his ghostwriters. In order to better understand the difficulties he faces, I set out to experience them for myself. Running for President was out of the question. But as a political reporter, I'm occasionally expected to appear on television and speak knowledgeably about current events without being a bore—a reasonable enough approximation. And just as Kerry seeks to impress specific constituencies during his appearances (undecideds, independents, disillusioned Republicans), I seek to impress important constituencies of my own (college buddies, ex-girlfriends, potential employers). So, like Kerry, I enlisted the help of a staff writer for HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*—in my case Jay Jaroch, an old friend who for several weeks last year volunteered to write material for me each time I was to be a guest.

If my experience is any indication, there is hope for even someone as humor-impaired as Kerry. Having one's own comedy writer is like taking a performance-enhancing drug: it provides that which nature has not. When MSNBC booked me to debate what was then still an open question—whether weapons of mass destruction would be found in Iraq—I was able to point out that it was "starting to look like Al Capone's vault

over there," reducing the show's host, Pat Buchanan, to giggles. Later, when Donald Rumsfeld was at a low point over chaos in Iraq, I came supplied with the line "The only guy less popular at the moment is the judge who struck down the telemarketers' 'Do Not Call' list." Same effect. And to poke fun at Kerry's habit of shamelessly invoking his Vietnam service at every opportunity, when discussion turned to his recent duck-hunting trip, my lines called for me to say, "Every time Kerry shoots a duck, he yells, 'Medic!'"

The effect was immediate and unmistakable. After my initial MSNBC appearance, the producer emerged from her control room to introduce herself and insist that I return. I did so the following week, and once again my material slayed. Invitations to appear on this show and others began to pick up—a result I can credit only to my professional help. Having a comedy writer is a transformative experience, and not just in front of the camera. Being armed with a steady supply of funny lines imparts a suffusive confidence with wide-ranging effects on one's personality—what I imagine it must be like for a bald person suddenly to don a particularly convincing toupee.

Whether Kerry can pull it off remains to be seen. Last November he made a disastrous appearance on *The Tonight Show*, where he was the butt of jokes by a sock puppet named Triumph the Insult Comic Dog. But history suggests that even the worst cases can succeed. Richard Nixon's political career was thought to be destroyed by his tirade against the media in 1962, after he was defeated for governor of California. His famous *Laugh-In* appearance six years later was part of an image-softening campaign to introduce "the new Nixon" during his 1968 presidential run. In hindsight this sounds like a bad joke. But Nixon won the presidency, at least in part because he learned how to deliver a good one. ■

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic and a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.



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HOW DO I LOOK?

Body armor is a must in some lines of work, and it gives "fashion plate" a whole new meaning

For years I had been borrowing this particular piece of sartorial equipment. Now I felt that I had reached the stage in life where I needed something that fit right, set the appropriate tone, and was hanging in my own closet ready for use. I am not talking about a tuxedo. I am talking about body armor: a vest that holds steel, ceramic, or polyethylene plates for protection against 9 mm, 5.56 mm, and 7.62 mm rounds, and also against various fragmentation devices.

I thought that buying a bulletproof vest and helmet would be simple, but it quickly became complicated—so many choices, so many Web sites, so much conflicting advice from friends. In the early twenty-first century there is a big demand for this type of thing. There are waiting lists for certain vests, and not all sizes are in stock. Just as there are people who attend soirees, company dinners, awards nights, and charity balls, there are people who find themselves in war zones, and they need to be protected but also to look right.

I was attracted to one Web site, BotachTactical.com, which advertised "Clearance: Great Products at Blowout Prices." It offered machine-washable Point Blank Concealable Armor with removable panels. Another Web site, BulletProofME.com, offered similar vests to "put the odds back in YOUR favor."

But I didn't want concealable armor that fit under a shirt—I am not a Secret Service agent, a police detective, a convenience-store clerk in a high-crime area, a drug lord, or a Mafioso. I wanted tactical body armor that fits over a shirt or a jacket. And the array of tactical body armor offered on the Internet seemed endless.

Friends in the Marines and the Army Special Forces recommended that I buy a vest and plates that gave Level III or IV protection. With that in mind I found a Military Outer Tactical Vest (OTV) I liked for \$790 at Bullet ProofME.com, and an even nicer Para-

plete Modular Armor Vest—a "hybrid composite [of] Goldflex and Spectraflex"—sold by Lightfighter.com for \$1,990, with soft-armor panels and Velcro pockets for hard-armor trauma plates.

When it comes to armor plates, you pay for lightness. As one Web site put it, an iron stove will stop a bullet, but

who wants to wear an iron stove strapped to his body? Thus nine-pound steel plates cost \$110 apiece on Bullet ProofME.com, whereas ceramic plates that weigh only

five and a half pounds cost \$245 apiece, and "maximum coverage" ceramic plates that weigh 7.9 pounds cost \$280. The lightest plates—three pounds—are made of polyethylene, and cost \$395 each.

All right, I thought. I'll buy polyethylene. Trouble is, polyethylene can deteriorate when exposed to excessive heat—so don't leave your IBA (Individual Body Armor) in a vehicle cooking in the sun, one seller advised. Well, I had just spent a summer in the southern Philippines and part of an autumn in Afghanistan cooking in the sun. Moreover, the polyethylene plates did not fit inside some of the vests I liked.

There were other decisions, too. Did I need side plates? I remembered hearing a colonel berate a sergeant in Afghanistan for not having side plates. "Do you want to die, son?" the colonel asked. "Well, sir," the sergeant replied, "my first wife is getting one half of my retirement pension and my second wife the other half, so it's a good question."

Then I discovered an entire new range of plates, some offering point-blank Level IV protection: if 7.62 mm armor-piercing ammunition hits you twice in the same plate, you are still protected. A single Multi Hit III++ Hard Armor Plate costs \$1,678.95 at Paraclete armor.com. The top of the line from this Web site was a Level IIIA releasable vest filled with multi-hit plates for \$7,300.05, complete with pockets for ammunition, magazines, and explosive devices such as flash bangs.

I also had to choose a color. The vests that interested me came in black, plain tan, smoke green, woodland camouflage, and desert or tricolor camouflage. Black was out of place everywhere I had been. Plain tan attracted me, because it would set me apart as a journalist without being too conspicuous among the desert cammies worn by American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Woodland camouflage is the forest-green pattern used by the U.S. Army in every theater except the Middle East; I had seen woodland vests used occasionally in the Middle East, though I had never seen desert cammies used in South America or the Pacific. I liked woodland, but smoke green might be an alternative, I thought.

My decision was further complicated by the Marines. They wear digital cammies in a pattern different from the woodland and tricolor designs of the other services. Would they be offended if I wore woodland?

As with a lot of clothing these days, there were accessory items to consider. Did I want groin protection? Well, why not? The problem was that, as I had learned in the southern Philippines from observing an exercise featuring low-level explosives, groin protectors are cumbersome, albeit useful if something explodes at your feet.

There were other possibilities too. Members of an Army Special Forces team I had encountered in southern Afghanistan didn't like any of the vests on the market, so they ordered ceramic plates from the United States and had an Afghan tailor design vests for them. After all, why not employ and consult the locals, in order to win hearts and minds? I tried on one of the Afghan vests. No, I thought, it wasn't *me*.

In London, if you have money and you want an expert to make decisions about your dinner jacket, you might go to Savile Row. In the United States for this kind of thing you might go to Fayetteville, North Carolina, outside

SECURITY
**ROBERT D.
KAPLAN**

FOUND OBJECT

HITLER'S "AMERIKABOMBER"

The idea of flying planes into skyscrapers didn't originate with al-Qaeda

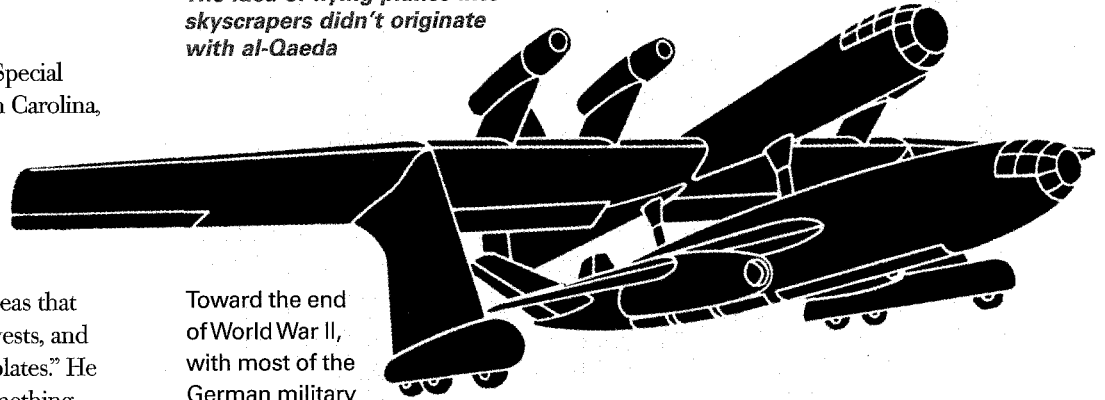
Fort Bragg, home of the Army Special Forces, or to Jacksonville, North Carolina, home of the Marine base Camp Lejeune.

In Fayetteville, I learned from a friend who has had a lifetime of experience in plain-clothes intelligence work overseas that "there are vests and there are vests, and there are plates and there are plates." He warned, "Don't just go buy something over the Internet." He also advised me against buying any plates not made of boron carbide or silicon carbide or not in "tiled array" (if a plate cracks when one bullet hits you, you want the damage isolated to a tile, keeping the rest of the plate intact). Another friend told me that stopping rounds from an AK-47 isn't enough; a plate has to be able to stop armor-piercing bullets, too.

In Afghanistan I had noticed that if body armor is too heavy, you wind up taking it off at every opportunity. And bad things happen when you least expect it. In the end I traded some protection for lightness, figuring that if my body armor was comfortable, I'd wear it more often and be better protected. I bought a ProMAX Tactical Vest for \$750, with front and back polyethylene plates. I had been advised that the plates, snug inside the vest, would be protected from the sun for at least a few years. I had asked for tan, but it was sold out in my size, so I settled for desert camouflage. The total package cost \$1,540 at BulletProofME.com, an Austin, Texas, firm with great customer service. A helmet and ballistic eyewear (from another Web site) added another \$340 to the bill. The helmet was covered in a desert pattern, and the salesman sent along a woodland cover for use outside the Middle East.

Everywhere in my odyssey through the world of body armor, salesmen mentioned satisfied customers. It was the unsatisfied customers I worried about. ■

Robert D. Kaplan, a correspondent for The Atlantic, is writing a series of articles about U.S. troops in far-flung parts of the world.



Toward the end of World War II, with most of the German military establishment con-

vinced that the war was already lost, an increasingly desperate Adolf Hitler ordered his engineers to begin an intense campaign to develop new types of unconventional weapons—*Wunderwaffen*, or "miracle weapons," as they came to be called. The program also included plans, now largely forgotten, for what was called "Projekt 'A'" —a huge plane intended to fly repeat missions over the Atlantic, where it would release a smaller bomber that would continue on to carry out an attack against a target along the eastern coast of the United States. Hitler and his close associates referred to the plane as the "Amerikabomber."

A technical drawing of the Amerikabomber, prepared in 1944 by Fritz Nallinger, an aeronautics engineer working for Daimler-Benz, appears above. Drawings of the plane appeared in *Die deutschen Flugzeuge 1933–1945*, an obscure single-volume encyclopedia, long out of print, devoted to airplanes of the Nazi period. Recently brought back to light by Ulrich Albrecht, a professor of political science at the Free University in Berlin, the drawings show prototypes for a large, multi-engine mother aircraft with a smaller plane attached to its underbelly. The plans for this smaller plane, which was designed to fly almost at the speed of sound, clearly lack landing gear and weapons systems. Accompanying technical descriptions note that the plane was not expected to be "recovered" —strongly suggesting that it was intended to be used as a bomb.

The Nazis' interest in suicide bombing was no secret. In 1943 Heinrich Himmler, the leader of Hitler's SS, had enthusiastically endorsed a plan to sink Allied ships with suicide air attacks. Hitler opposed the idea at the time, but in 1944, with the war going badly, he agreed to the formation of special squadrons of suicide bombers. A hundred and four volunteers were selected as pilots of one squadron; each signed a statement saying, "I understand that I will die at the end of my mission." Wearing all their military decorations, and listening to music and women's voices on their headphones, sixteen of these pilots flew suicide missions on April 16 and 17, 1945, in a desperate effort to defend Berlin from the advancing Red Army.

Hitler's desire to attack the United States was also no secret. "I have never seen him so infuriated as towards the end of the war," Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and the Nazi minister responsible for arms production, recalled in his diary in 1947.

It was almost as if he was in a delirium when he described to us how New York would go up in flames. He imagined how the skyscrapers would turn into huge burning torches. How they would crumble while the reflection of the flames would light the skyline against the dark sky.

—DIETER WULF

Dieter Wulf is a political scientist and freelance journalist based in Berlin.

ACCIDENTALLY MOONSTRUCK

Bart Howard (1915–2004)

According to Johnny Mercer, “writing music takes more talent, but writing lyrics takes more courage.” What he meant was that a tune can be beguiling and melancholy and intoxicating and a lot of other blurry abstractions, but there comes a moment when you have to sit down and get specific, and put the other half of the equation on top of those notes. A songwriter spends his life chasing the umpteenth variation on “I love you,” and that takes courage because there’s usually a good reason why no one’s used your variation: the thought’s too precious, or clunky, or contrived.

Topicality isn’t much help. The American telegraph and telephony songs of the 1890s (“I Guess I’ll Have to Telegraph My Baby”) and the airplane songs of the oughts (“Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine”) seemed like smart moves at the time, but this is one area where the fundamental things apply as time goes by. Moon/June/stars above/so in love, etc.

So in 1953 Bart Howard sat down to write a love song, and for once, as he put it, “the song just fell out of me.” In twenty minutes he had a number that was full of all the usual stuff—moon, stars—and not so much topical as prescient. It’s the only hit he ever wrote, and he didn’t need another. He called it “In Other Words.”

Never heard of it? That’s because Howard didn’t know what he was sitting on. What hits you aren’t the other words, but the first five: “Fly me to the moon.”

You might know it by Peggy Lee, or Tony Bennett, or Dion and the Belmonts, Astrud Gilberto, Marvin Gaye, Diana Krall, or any one of a few hundred others. You might know it from the opening of Oliver Stone’s valentine to the “decade of greed,” *Wall Street*: the trains and ferries and buses feed the workers into the city, hundreds and thousands of stick figures pouring up from the subway tunnels and onto the teeming sidewalks of Lower Manhattan. And above the skyscrapers

Count Basie plays and Sinatra sings:

*Fly me to the moon,
Let me play among the stars.
Let me see what spring is like
On Jupiter and Mars.*

The song makes the scene. Otherwise, it’s nothing, for what’s drearier and more earthbound, more literally everyday, than commuting? But not when it’s accompanied by Basie and Sinatra and a Quincy Jones arrangement that starts low-key with bass and tweeting flutes and surges into

blaring brass rocketing into the skies. It’s what Nelson Riddle meant when he called his preferred 4/4 tempo for Sinatra the “tempo of the heartbeat.” It’s what Bono had in mind when he said, “Frank walks like America. Cocksure.” And, of course, it’s what Gordon Gekko renders more bluntly in his “greed is good” speech: all the possibilities of the day ahead, all the dreams and ambitions of the anonymous figures on the street, articulated in music and, like the buildings, reaching for the stars.

By then “Fly Me to the Moon” had served as the soundtrack for the fulfillment of the grandest dream of all: in 1969 Buzz Aldrin took a portable tape player up there with him, and “Fly Me to the Moon” became the first moon song to get to the moon itself. “The first music played on the moon,” said Quincy Jones. “I freaked.”

And none of this is anything Bart Howard had in mind for his song. “I didn’t know what I’d written,” he told me a few years ago. On his death, NPR’s Michelle Norris announced that they’d be paying tribute to “the songwriter who wanted to see what spring is like on Jupiter and Mars.” But that’s exactly what Howard didn’t mean. He couldn’t have been less interested in what spring

is like on Jupiter and Mars. His little-heard verse sets up the premise.

*Poets often use many words
To say a simple thing.
It takes thought and time and rhyme
To make a poem sing.
With music and words I’ve been playing,
For you I have written a song:
To be sure that you know what I’m saying,
I’ll translate as I go along.*

*Fly me to the moon
And let me play among the stars.
Let me see what spring is like
On Jupiter and Mars.
In other words,
Hold my hand.
In other words,
Darling, kiss me.*

In other words, Howard wasn’t reaching for the stars but trying to bring the airy, high-flown sentiments of romance back down to earth. He called the song “In Other Words” because that’s what it was about—what we’re really saying

underneath all the “Moonlight Becomes You” starry-eyed hooey. He wrote it for Mabel Mercer, whose accompanist he was in the postwar years at Tony’s, on Fifty-second Street. In its first decade “In Other Words” was picked up by all Manhattan’s cabaret darlings—Kaye Ballard, Felicia Sanders, Portia Nelson. They sang it as

it was written, in waltz time, or in a very slow ballad tempo. And instead of that supreme Sinatra confidence, it had a wistful and tentative sound.

Pretty much all Howard’s compositions did in those days. His other great flying line comes in another cabaret song called “Walk Up”—a recollection of love in a cheap flat upstairs on the fourth floor. “We’d fly up every night”: it’s an intimate, rueful lyric, but a little too special, too particular. Howard’s cabaret songs from the 1950s seem specific to that world, and a bit exclusive of every-



RAY LONG

body else's. He wasn't wealthy, nor were his friends, but even a fourth-floor walk-up had a kind of romance to a boy from Burlington, Iowa. "He was the epitome of a certain kind of New York elegance that people that came to New York aspired to," said James Gavin, the author of *Intimate Nights: The Golden Age of New York Cabaret*. Howard was homosexual, and that was easier in the city too.

He started out at sixteen, playing piano in a dance band through the Depression. He accompanied Violet and Daisy Hilton, Siamese twins joined at the hip and lower back, who specialized in vigorous three-legged tap routines. (They appeared in Tod Browning's 1932 film *Freaks*.) Bob Hope worked with them too, before concluding, "They're too much of a woman for me." Howard moved on to accompany the drag act Ray Bourbon, and eventually to New York, the Rainbow Room, and the life he'd wanted all along. It's a small, in-the-know world, and "In Other Words" is tailored to it—at least in its suggestion that big, bellowed professions of love are not what really matters.

In 1954, Howard finished up "In Other Words" and took it to his publisher, who loved everything about it except that first line of the chorus. "Fly me to the moon"? Nobody said "fly me"; it didn't sound right. How about switching it to "Take me to the moon"? Howard resisted, which was just as well. There were more than a hundred recordings in the next few years, and the song never did take flight. Then the sixties came along, and the space race got going, and so did bossa nova, and a chi-chi ballad for the cognoscenti suddenly seemed in tune with the times. Peggy Lee suggested renaming it "Fly Me to the Moon," and her conductor, Joe Harnell, had an instrumental hit with it.

Basie and Sinatra enlarged the song, opened it up for the world beyond Fifty-second Street. It's literal now: it flies to the moon, a love song for the space age, a wild ride with a well-

stocked wet bar. In the 1990s, Sinatra did a couple of faux "duet" CDs for which he recorded his songs solo and then Phil Ramone scrambled around to find supposedly young, hot acts that could be pasted into the tracks. For "Fly Me to the Moon," they asked the country singer George Strait, and the strained hipster patter of the intro—George's banter with an absent Frank, a Frank who left the studio months earlier, a Frank who's never even heard of George Strait—sums up, in a desperate, wannabe-cool kind of way, the transformation of Bart Howard's little cabaret ballad: "Hey, Francis, I don't know 'bout you, but I could use a break ... Maybe a trip or somethin'."

Fly me to the moon.

By this time "Fly Me to the Moon" was such a Vegas uber-singer that the overwrought cabaret songstresses defiantly reclaimed it, putting it back in three-quarter or ballad time. The critic Will Friedwald says the fast and slow versions are really two separate numbers, respectively "Fly Me to the Moon" and "In Other Words." So Bart Howard achieved a rare distinction: he was the only one-hit songwriter to get two standards out of his one hit.

It was enough. After the Sinatra recording, Howard retired on the song, and dabbled in interior decorating for most of the rest of his life—a modest, dapper man who'd written a tune about not flying to the moon that somehow wound up there. Had another nation beaten NASA to it, it would have marked the occasion with the "Ode to Joy" or "Also Sprach Zarathustra"—something grand and formal. But there's something very American about Buzz Aldrin's standing on the surface of the moon with his cassette machine, Sinatra "cocksure" in 4/4, with Count Basie and Quincy Jones. The sound of the American century as it broke the bounds of the planet: a Bart Howard song finally playing among the stars. ▀

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.

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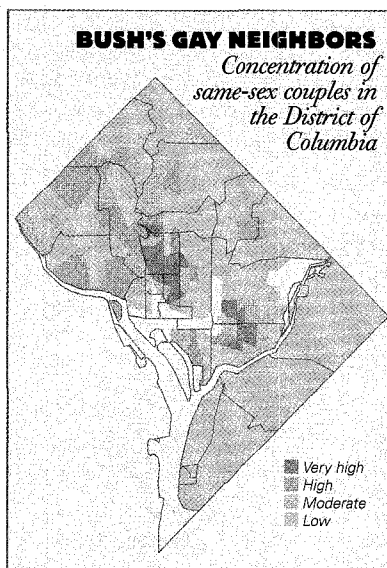
Your gay neighbors (and their children); what's really behind France's headscarf ban; why people don't tell lies over e-mail; the illusion of order in suburban schools; the scientific secret of sex appeal

SOCIETY

Ozzie and Harry

Whether gays will be permitted to marry is an open question; whether they will continue to do many of the things married people do is not. According to a pioneering study of gay demographics by Gary Gates and Jason Ost, researchers at the Urban Institute, some 1.2 million homosexuals report living together in America as "unmarried partners." (The actual number is doubtless much higher.) According to the authors, same-sex couples account for nearly one percent of households. Not surprisingly, male homosexual couples are likely to live in major urban areas, particularly along the East and West Coasts: San Francisco, Seattle, New York, and Miami all score high on the study's "gay index." (In spite of its reputation, San Francisco—where 16 to 25 percent of adult males are thought to be homosexual—is only the tenth gayest town in the country, beaten out by Provincetown, Massachusetts, and other famous gay meccas, but also by more-obscure locales, including North Druid Hills, Georgia.) Lesbian couples, in contrast, tend to favor smaller cities, such as Portland, Maine, and Burlington, Vermont, and also bucolic college towns—Northampton, Massachusetts, for example. Such clustering aside, the study concludes that gay and lesbian couples are found virtually everywhere: in 99 percent of U.S. counties, according to the 2000 census. And more than a quarter of same-sex couples are raising children; these couples, like straight parents, have an average of two per family.

—Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost, *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas*, The Urban Institute



Lies, Damn Lies, and E-Mail

Recent research suggests that e-mail exchanges build trust more slowly than other forms of communication—but now a Cornell University study argues that the opposite should be true, because people are considerably more likely to lie over the phone and in face-to-face conversation than in e-mail. For the survey a set of Cornell students kept a week-long communications diary in which they noted the number of conversations and electronic interactions they had, and then counted up the number of lies (defined as attempts to intentionally mislead) they told in each exchange. The results: they lied in only 14 percent of e-mail exchanges, compared with 21 percent of instant-message "conversations," 27 percent of face-to-face interactions, and 37 percent

of phone conversations. (No word on the propensity to lie in communications diaries.) The study's authors speculate that people lie more often when they are communicating synchronously—as in face-to-face, instant-message, and telephone chats—because most lies "emerge spontaneously from conversation." The authors also suggest that untruths are rarer when people know that an easily accessible record of their falsehoods exists. It's worth noting, however, that the more the study's subjects used e-mail, the likelier they were to lie while doing so—suggesting that familiarity with a technology may breed deception.

—"Deception and Design: The Impact of Communication Technology on Lying Behavior," Jeffrey T. Hancock, Jennifer Thom-Santelli, and Thompson Ritchie, Department of Communication, Cornell University

Nice VHL, Baby

What's the key to sex appeal? According to researchers at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University—who recently asked fifty-four men and women to rate the physical attractiveness of an alterable 3-D female model—it's the "volume/height index," or VHI. The formula is simple: body volume divided by the squared height (V/H^2). The researchers admit, however, that their sexiness formula has limitations: If VHI were the only determinant of attractiveness, a completely tubular body would be as sexy as a curvaceous one. And the formula itself seems to exclude some rather important data. To wit: "V is the volume of the female body *excluding the head* [italics added], HC is the chin height (the body height from chin to the bottom of the feet)." In other words, Helen would have needed an excellent VHI to launch a thousand ships, because her face would have been factored out.

—"Visual Perception of Female Physical Attractiveness," J. Fan, F. Liu, J. Wu, and W. Dai, Institute of Textiles and Clothing, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

THE NATION

The Suburban Jungle

For city dwellers, migrating to the suburbs when it's time to have kids may sound like the sensible thing to do, but a new Manhattan Institute study suggests that the benefits of a suburban upbringing are vastly overestimated. Using data on high school students from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the authors find that urban and suburban high schools are virtually identical in terms of drug and alcohol use and sexual activity (though pregnancy rates are higher in city schools)—and that suburban kids are actually more likely than their urban peers to become regular smokers. Suburban teens are also more likely to drive while high or drunk—though the nature of life in the suburbs means that teens who live there are more likely to drive, period. Rates of fighting and stealing, too, are

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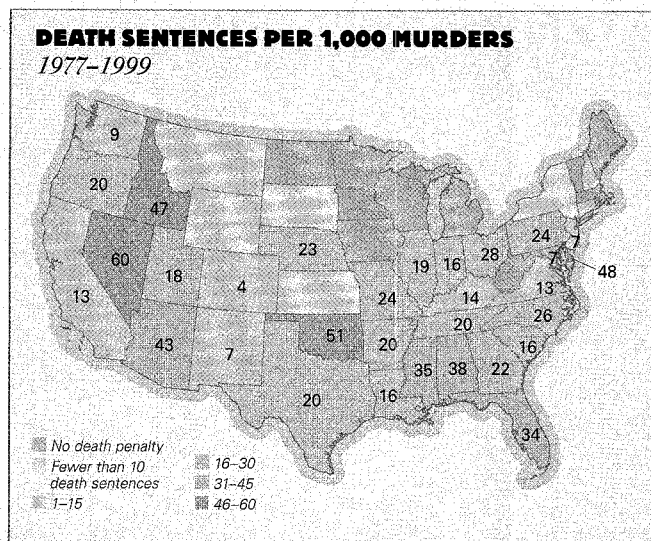
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The Facts of Death

It is widely believed that Texas is the nation's execution capital, and that blacks are overrepresented on America's death rows. The reality in both cases is more complicated, according to a study published in the *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*. Although Texas's death row is the largest in the nation, the overall percentage of murderers sentenced to death is actually lower in the Lone Star State than in fifteen others: for every thousand murders, Texas sentences twenty people to death, compared with fifty-one in neighboring Oklahoma and an average of twenty-five among the thirty-one death-penalty states included in the study. Texas's reputation as death-sentence-happy rests primarily on its high murder rate and on its willingness to carry out the sentences it imposes. (California, for instance, sentences nearly as many people to death as Texas, but as of this writing has executed only ten of them since 1977, whereas Texas has executed 319.) As for the supposed overrepresentation of blacks among those sentenced to death, blacks make up 41 percent of death-row inmates and commit about 50 percent of all murders nationally (in both death-penalty and non-death-penalty states). The study's authors are quick to note, however, that judges and juries are least likely to impose the death penalty in black-on-black murders (which make up the majority of murder cases involving blacks), more likely to do so in white-on-white cases, and most likely when the perpetrator is black and the victim is white.

—“Explaining Death Row's Population and Racial Composition,” John Blume, Theodore Eisenberg, and Martin T. Wells, *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*



councils—where, oddly enough, they often belong to the far-right National Front.) School-children are still introduced in class to “our ancestors, the Gauls,” and French textbooks gloss over Algeria’s 130-year history as an integral part of France—and also the brutal war for Algerian independence. Successful “integration” is measured by progress toward “the suppression of particularities connected to ...

national origin.” Even second-generation French people of Algerian ancestry are still referred to as immigrants—*d’origine étrangère*. Meanwhile, by the late 1990s nearly half of the country’s foreign-born population under twenty-five was unemployed; many of these people live in the public-housing ghettos that ring major cities. But any discussion of minorities’ problems is taboo, because under the country’s strictly enforced republican principles of secularism and universalism, racial and religious minorities don’t exist as public-policy categories—they’re all just French people. To rectify this the authors suggest an ambitious program of “*discrimination positive*”—affirmative action. If observant Muslims are forced to choose between French and Islamic identities (for instance, if they have to forgo headscarves), the report warns, many will divorce themselves from the national culture and form separate communities within French society.

—*Les Oubliés de l’Égalité des Chances*, Yazid Sabeg and Laurence Méhaignerie, Institut Montaigne

roughly comparable—and to no one’s surprise, suburban teens are as likely as their urban counterparts to lie to their parents. No one is suggesting, of course, that urban schools (which tend to have fewer resources per pupil) are on average better than suburban schools, or that the typical student will be better off in an urban school. But overall, the study concludes, “the comforting outward signs of order and decency—shiny new schools armed with expensive textbooks and staffed by teachers who have mastered the latest educational fads—don’t seem to be associated with substantial differences in student behavior.”

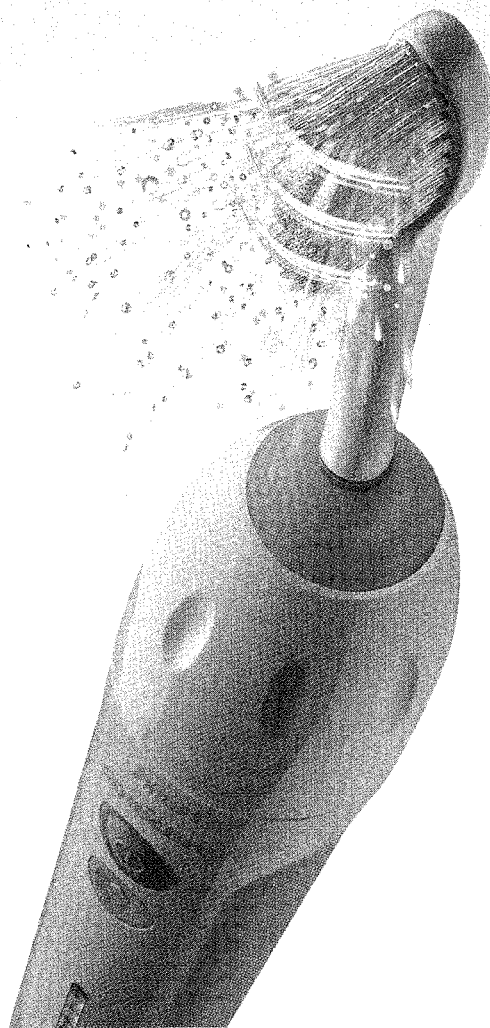
—“Sex, Drugs, and Delinquency in Urban and Suburban Public Schools,” Jay P. Greene and Greg Forster, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

“Discrimination Positive”

The French government recently moved to ban Muslim headscarves in schools, but the controversy is overblown: according to a new report by the Institut Montaigne, a Paris-based think tank, there were only 160 formally reported incidents of girls’ wearing headscarves in 2002, down from 400 in 1994. As the authors of this report point out, the ban is actually an indirect and inept way of dealing with France’s race problem. Though France’s African and Arab minorities now make up 10 to 12 percent of the populace, there are no minority politicians to speak of. (The few that exist sit chiefly on the weak regional

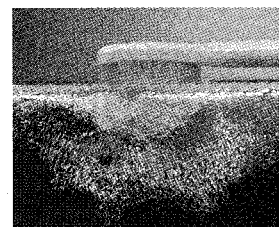
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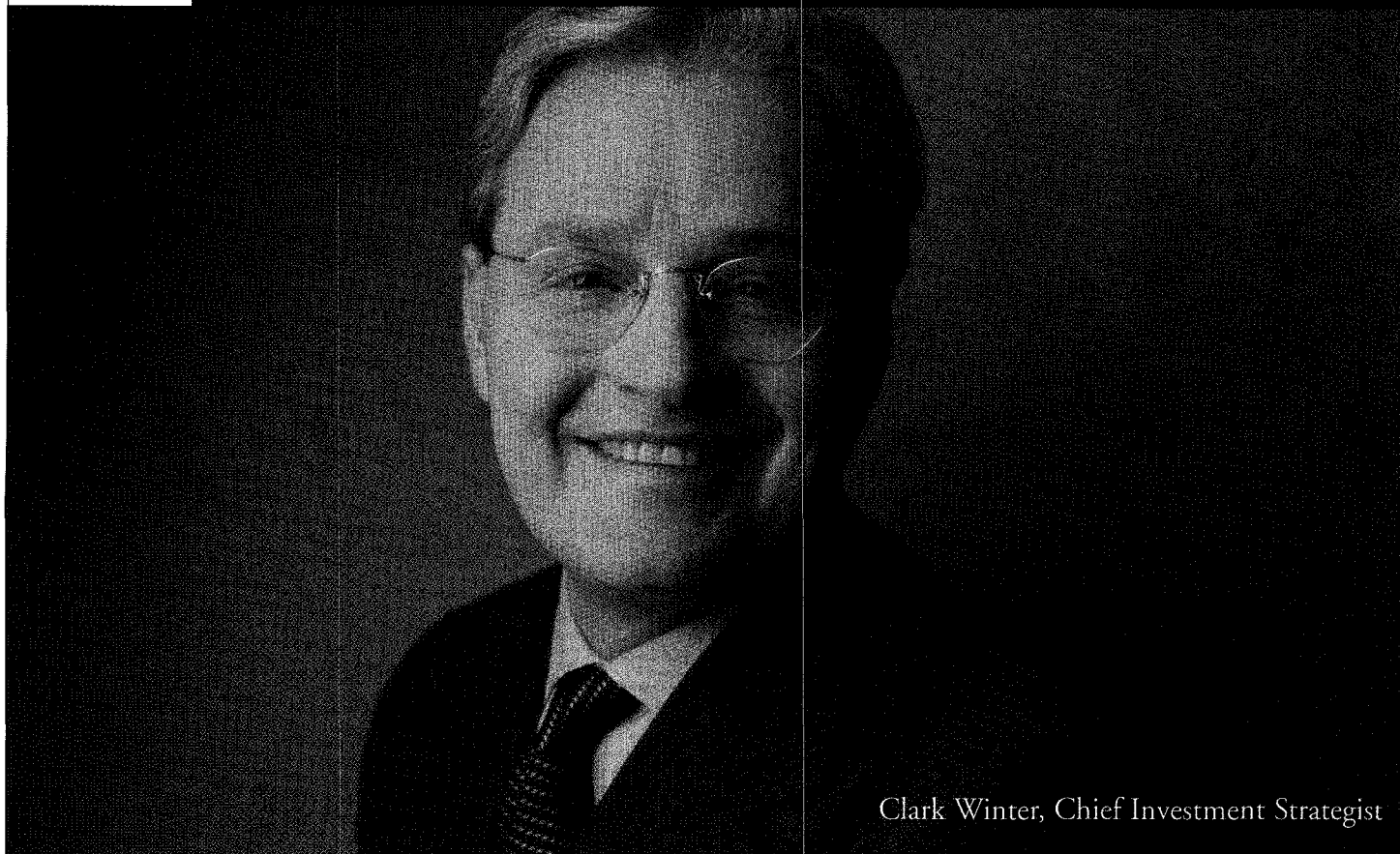
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MY TIMES

A year after the Jayson Blair scandal, the deposed executive editor of The New York Times answers his critics, acknowledges his mistakes, deconstructs the events that ended his tumultuous tenure, and provides a no-holds-barred assessment of what he sees as a great newspaper in crisis

BY HOWELL RAINES

Illustrations by John Ritter

.....

It has been almost a year since I was dismissed as executive editor of *The New York Times*, a casualty of the turmoil that followed the forced resignation of a troubled young reporter, Jayson Blair, who had fabricated or plagiarized facts and quotations in scores of news stories. I am not going to spend the rest of my life going over the details of the Blair scandal. My intention here is to perform a final service for the newspaper that I worked for and loved for twenty-five years, by revealing the real struggle that was going on behind the scenes at the *Times* as the Blair scandal played out.

To do so requires me to put on the record both the revitalization strategy that my closest colleagues and I were pursuing at the *Times* and the underlying analysis of the paper's vulnerabilities that gave us a sense of urgency. This strategy had the support of our publisher, Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr., who throughout his career has pushed for a *Times* that guarded its traditions but also sought to make itself smarter, livelier, and more appealing to the geographically diverse and demanding national audience on which its future depends. We believed that the paper's long-term viability required significant improvements in the quality of its journalism—from the calcified front page our new leadership team had inherited on September 5, 2001, to the neglected, underfinanced “soft” sections at “the back of the book.” A quiet but intense factional war was going on within the *Times*, between the senior editors who endorsed these improvements and traditionalists on the



newsroom floor and among mid-level managers. The latter group wanted the paper to stay the way it was and took as an insult the animating idea behind our strategy: the idea that “the world’s greatest newspaper” is not nearly as good as it could be and ought to be.

Despite the unfortunate ending of my career there, I remain devoted to the *Times*, because it is in every sense an irreplaceable American institution. The *Times* not only occupies a central place in our national civic life but also plays just as important a role as the ethical keystone of American journalism. It misses the point to say that the *Times* is an “elite” publication. It is the indispensable newsletter of the

United States’ political, diplomatic, governmental, academic, and professional communities, and the main link between those communities and their counterparts around the world. And yet a harsh reality of our era is that if the *Times* ever ceased to exist, it would not be reinvented by any media company now in operation, in this country or in the world. A harsher reality is that its ability to prosper in the modern media marketplace is not at all assured. That is why Arthur

Sulzberger has spent much of his twelve-year career as publisher trying to improve the quality of the *Times*’s journalism—an effort that both of us saw as the best way to ensure The New York Times Company’s future as a business.

I felt on the day I became executive editor and on the day I drove away from West Forty-third Street for the last time that the *Times* badly needs to raise the level of its journalism, and to

Howell Raines worked for The New York Times for twenty-five years. He is the author of three books, including the best-selling memoir Fly Fishing Through the Midlife Crisis and My Soul Is Rested, an oral history of the civil-rights movement. He won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing in 1992.

do so quickly in order to survive and make the full transition to the digital age. Today the sad fact is that Arthur Sulzberger, who was my partner in the great enterprise of revitalizing the *Times*, and who remains my friend, may no longer be in a strong enough position internally to push all the reforms we felt were essential. Although there are signs that the front-to-back improvements we sought are beginning to move forward in a piecemeal fashion, for the time being Arthur and his top editors seem to be picking their way across a minefield, having seen the destructive power of a change-resistant newsroom. After months of deliberation and many invitations to write about the *Times*, I have chosen this forum to tell my former colleagues at the paper and its many devoted readers exactly where I think the paper needs to go. My views were shaped by a small group of strategists that Arthur had painstakingly assembled. That little round table is now broken, but there's no reason a new one can't be brought together to advance the goals we set. No one inside the *Times* can speak right now as candidly as I to the full extent of that strategic vision.

FOLKWAYS AND MORES

When the New York-born folklorist Carl Carmer wrote his classic study of my native state, *Stars Fell on Alabama* (1934), he said that the place that calls itself the heart of Dixie was so different from the rest of the United States that the only way he could begin to write about it was to conceive of it as a foreign country. The *Times* is its own country too, and it is essential to this task that I somehow convey what *Times* people call "our culture." First and foremost, it is a culture that requires mass allegiance to the idea that any change, no matter how beneficial on its surface, is to be treated as a potential danger. Oddly, this paper, which is a great engine of truth, has operated as long as anyone can remember on an internal personnel system I came to think of as management by mendacity. Great work gets the great praise it deserves, but routine work, too, is praised as excellent at the *Times*, and sloppy work is accepted as adequate. This skewed standard of verbal reward, coupled with the paper's sometimes mindless job guarantees to the main employees' union, the Newspaper Guild, has over the years created a huge obstacle to the development of a meritocratic workplace. Arthur often challenged the newsroom bosses to match the business side's diligence in using complicated contractual procedures to force incompetents off the staff, but generations of senior editors have found it an excruciating task to put out the paper while testifying at endless grievance hearings. On a newsroom floor with some 1,200 journalistic employees and an even larger, more militantly pro-Guild support staff, where the company is the daddy and the union is the mommy, no one is supposed to speak publicly about the attitudes of entitlement and smug complacency that pervade the paper. These attitudes undermine the staff's willingness to bring its talents fully to

bear on the daily challenges of improving the *Times*. The paper's top editors have complained privately for years about the dysfunctional traits the Guild tries to program into newcomers. Some departments hastily and explicitly school impressionable reporters in shrugging off scoops by other news organizations, with the reassuring but dangerously outmoded *Times* maxim "It's not news until we say it's news." The debilitating corollary to this idea is that it's all right for the *Times* to get beaten on big stories, because when it gets around to doing them, it'll do them better.

In the only interview I have given on the Jayson Blair affair, I spoke on the *Charlie Rose* show of the resistance I had encountered as a "change agent" who was handpicked by the publisher to confront the newsroom's lethargy and complacency. A few days later, as he introduced my successor, Bill Keller, to the assembled staff, Arthur rebutted my comment by saying, "There's no complacency here—never has been, never will be." I can guarantee that no one in that newsroom, including Arthur himself, believed what he said. It was a ritual incantation meant to confirm the faith of everyone present in the *Times*'s defining myth of effortless superiority. Arthur's politic words were a declaration that although *Times* people may talk and sometimes even joke among themselves about the paper's deeply rooted complacency, that characteristic must be vehemently denied when mentioned outside the tribal circle. More important, Arthur's words signaled that nothing dramatic would be done to upset the paper's cosseted world.

As everyone there also knew, Arthur had appointed me, in June of 2001, to be "our Patton," as he put it in my first annual evaluation, and from that day on I spoke openly about my mandate to "raise our competitive metabolism." That language was chosen precisely to address two problems that had dogged the *Times* for years: its indifference to competition and its chronic slowness in anticipating the news and marshaling its superior resources. These traits are well known within the journalistic profession, and are a matter of constant and often despairing talk among *Times* veterans. Our casual pose of being above the fray and too self-assured to care had become a Victorian affectation we could no longer afford. And yet our pulse seemed to be getting slower as the country's got faster. For example, my predecessor, Joseph Lelyveld, warned me that I was inheriting a generation of national correspondents who resisted traveling to news events in their assigned regions. One of this lot was quoted to me by an editor as having said he didn't need to make reporting trips because he could learn more about what was going on in his territory by using the Internet.

As it happened, the events of September 11, 2001, raised the staff's competitive metabolism to a level beyond anything I could have expected. The newsroom's response was more than magnificent. It was inspirational. In the wake of 9/11 our reporters and editors continued to roll through a series of stories that amounted to a nearly two-year blizzard

of news: the Afghan war, the search for Osama bin Laden, anthrax attacks, intelligence failures, corporate scandals, the war in Iraq. From day one the *Times* staff dominated almost every aspect of the World Trade Center story. It was a triumph built on institutional memory; the knowledge of how to blanket a big story is imprinted on *Times* DNA regardless of who the executive editor is. The story played to some of my personal strengths, such as a passion for the intellectual challenge of full-tilt coverage and a determination to make sure that readers get the most complete picture possible, informationally and analytically, on stories of historic scale. Meanwhile, the sheer visual beauty of our front pages, and the daily war and terrorism section, "A Nation Challenged," kept us all pumped up. But the feverish pace also underscored some of my weaknesses. One of these is to respond to great staff effort by demanding that the next day we do "more, better, faster," in the words of Martin Baron, the similarly inclined editor of *The Boston Globe*. After the monumental accomplishments of covering 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan, I did not allow the staff enough breathing space before declaring, at the start of my second year as editor, that we were launching a year-long effort to upgrade the quality of our weaker sections.

A harsh reality of our era is that if the *Times* ever ceased to exist, no media company now in operation would reinvent it. A harsher reality is that its ability to prosper in the modern media marketplace is not at all assured.

As a result, I kept the staff outside its zone of comfort for more than nineteen months, continually ramping up the demands even as Arthur was responding to the advertising recession by freezing our budget to nearly pre-9/11 levels. When Jayson Blair's violations became public, I had no reservoir of good will on which to draw. I had underestimated the intensity of staff unrest—the "guerrilla war," to use the phrase of one of my most determined critics—that had turned the newsroom into a combat zone. Many of my colleagues became enraged when I spoke about the lethargy of the *Times*. It was a violation of newsroom *omerta*. I won't argue with those who say that my indifference to the approval of individual staff members was a disabling flaw. I revere journalists of talent and expertise, either instinctive or acquired, and I admire the *Times* for collecting a larger number of such people than any other paper. But I'm not a person who is easy to please or eager to please. The things that interested me about being executive editor

were making great journalism, experiencing the adrenalized camaraderie of a gifted staff going flat out on momentous stories, and, as an overall goal, getting the *Times* off its glide path toward irrelevance.

THE TWO CULTURES

About a decade ago several dozen *Times* editors convened for a retreat at Arrowwood, a sleek, soulless conference center in Westchester County. Arthur had brought along a management consultant named Doug Wesley and introduced him as our coach and facilitator. In his introductory seminar Wesley announced the lesson for the day: how to fire people. Then he divided us into smaller workshop groups. Most of us were department heads or deputies, frontline supervisors on the newsroom floor (I was the Washington editor at the time). The groups practiced termination interviews built around Wesley's main precepts. We were to sit directly facing the employee in a posture that indicated openness, receptivity—legs uncrossed, arms resting loosely on the arms of the chair. After saying to the person in a calm tone that he or she was being dismissed, and giving a brief, neutral explanation of the reason, we were to listen patiently while the employee vented freely. If he or she became angry, we were to say we understood the anger. At every turn we were to express personal sympathy but to offer no concessions. Once the soon-to-be-exiled worker realized the hopelessness of his or her situation, we were to collect the person's identification card, if that could be accomplished without a wrestling match.

After several hours of such role-playing we again gathered, so that Wesley could hear our comments and answer our questions. At the appropriate time I asked why we were being given this exercise, since at *The New York Times* we never fired anyone.

Wesley seemed surprised. What do you do with unproductive employees? he asked.

We just give them less work to do, I said, to a laughing burst of assent from the other editors in the group.

Wesley was puzzled, seeming to me at that moment like a new employee encountering the series of culture shocks that come with being hired at the *Times*. For people who have worked at other newspapers, the biggest shock upon coming to the *Times* is that the level of talent is not higher than it is. Actually, it would be more accurate to say the level of *applied talent*. Very few unintelligent people get hired at the *Times*. So what's shocking to the newcomer is the amount of coasting. Newspapers with slimmer resources and no union rules inhibiting dismissal somehow manage to closely monitor productivity. At the *Times*, as at Harvard, it is hard to get in and almost impossible to flunk out. All this was certainly a surprise to me, coming as I did from highly competitive, strictly supervised papers in Atlanta and St. Petersburg, as was the fact that the motivation and energy of the staff were so low. Hiring mistakes are rarely shown

the door at the *Times*, and the paper can be stuck with them for years. After a probationary period of fourteen weeks would-be staff members get tenure for life. In one famous case a supervising editor missed the fourteen-week deadline for dismissing an unproductive newsroom staffer. The supervisor told the staffer that surely he did not want to stay, on account of a technicality, where he was unwanted. The employee disagreed, said he could live with that, and is still there a quarter century later.

Even highly motivated people can find themselves adjusting to a slower beat. Over time the enveloping attitude on the newsroom floor has become "We can do it slower, because by and by, someone on this great staff will do it better." The tendency toward *mañana* journalism can infect newcomers as if it were carried in the air ducts, like Legionnaires' disease. Thus the pernicious world view—"It's not news until we say it's news"—gets inculcated with amazing speed, even at the news-clerk level. In 1981 a tipster who wanted to blow the whistle on the alleged misconduct of Ronald Reagan's deputy director of central intelligence, Max Hugel, couldn't get past the *Times*'s news clerks, so he took the scoop that led to Hugel's resignation to *The Washington Post*.

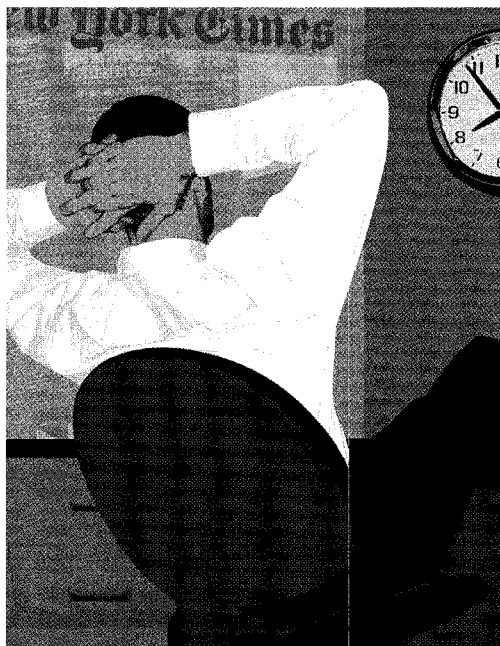
For the newcomer who happens to be a go-getter, this clock-punching atmosphere presents a tremendous opportunity to stand out, and the more aggressive editors keep their eyes peeled for reporters who are eager to prove themselves. That explains why David Halberstam became a premier war correspondent at twenty-eight. With a similar combination of talent and tirelessness, Dexter Filkins became a lead correspondent in the Afghan and Iraq wars after only a year at the *Times*. It took the always energetic Abe Rosenthal eleven years to work his way on to the foreign staff, but that is the exception, not the rule, and stemmed from the fact that the late Cy Sulzberger, the chief European correspondent at the time, and a member of the family that owned the *Times*, was a mannered Europhile who thought Abe too rough-hewn to be turned loose in the salons of Western Europe.

I was the lead reporter on Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign after only two years at the paper. By 1981 I was a White House correspondent, and two years later I was the chief national political reporter, a role I filled through the 1984 Reagan landslide. By 1985 I was the deputy Washington editor, by 1987 the London bureau chief, and two years later the chief of the Washington bureau. In 1984 the *Times* nominated for a Pulitzer Prize my inves-

tigative reporting on the 1963 church bombing that killed four black girls in Birmingham, and in 1992 I won the Pulitzer for feature writing for a piece in the Sunday magazine about growing up in the fifties amidst the racism of Birmingham, Alabama.

You might think that a place where rewards can be had so quickly would be a thoroughgoing performance culture. But the strange fact encountered by any executive editor who seeks to effect change, as almost all of them have wanted to do, is that a large percentage of *Times* reporters and editors opt out of meritocratic competition within a couple of years of joining the paper—in some cases within a matter of months. Thus the *Times* culture, which appears so monolithic from the outside, actually consists of two distinct and parallel cultures, each fully cognizant of the other: the culture of achievement and the culture of complaint. In

what amounts to a permanent version of a collegiate rush season, members of each culture woo newcomers with warm embraces and promises of protection. The two cultures are equally seductive. The Newspaper Guild serves as rush chairman of the culture of complaint, and with the *Times* hiring younger people these days, the Guild's safety net is particularly reassuring to new employees who may still be insecure about measuring up to *Times* standards. However, older reporters and copy editors whose careers are stalled and who are essentially running out the clock until retirement are the culture of complaint's chief stewards.



Over the years a number of prominent *Times* editors, bent on performance, have tried various stratagems to save talented journalists from the complainers' cult. As executive editor from 1977 to 1986, Abe Rosenthal used cash bonuses and quick promotions for people who burned to be on page one. Max Frankel during his executive editorship (1986–1994) installed, over furious Guild opposition, a system of bonuses, usually about \$20,000, for the paper's best writers and photographers. Bill Kovach, for years an influential editor at the *Times* and later the curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism, at Harvard, dispensed blunt advice to prevent new reporters from adopting Guild-endorsed work habits. In my first months as a reporter on the paper, I broke a story out of Birmingham providing evidence that paid FBI informers in the Ku Klux Klan had perpetrated some of the acts of violence they attributed to others.

You haven't been on the paper long enough to adopt our bad habits, Bill told me, as I stood in a phone booth outside

the Jefferson County Court House. Usually after we break a big story we sit back and let some other paper take it away from us. Go right back to your sources and keep reporting.

Kovach and some other editors, including David R. Jones, then the national editor, were pushing hard in those days because of the sting of the *Times's* Watergate defeat a half dozen years before. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, of *The Washington Post*, had covered the burglary of the Democratic National Committee as a police story, and had scored many of the major scoops that eventually toppled the Nixon White House, while the *Times* had gotten a late start and bought into the private assurances of high officials that things were being blown out of proportion. As Max Frankel, the Washington bureau chief during Watergate, admitted with admirable candor in his autobiography, *The Times of My Life and My Life at The Times*, our paper was beaten because its response to the political story of the century was "sluggish." Getting outworked on that story haunted Abe Rosenthal, then the managing editor, for years.

One day in 1980 Abe was exhorting me to be aggressive in our presidential-campaign coverage. Then he said ruefully that maybe I shouldn't listen to his advice. Look at the record, he said. We got beat on Watergate, and what did we do? We all gave ourselves promotions. I became executive editor, Seymour Topping became managing editor, and Max became editorial-page editor.

MY DINNERS WITH ARTHUR

In early 2001, Arthur Sulzberger strolled into my big, coffer-ceilinged office on the tenth floor—the floor that houses the editorial-page and op-ed staffs of the *Times*—and shut the door behind him. The tenth floor is the only one in the ninety-year-old building that retains the feeling of an old-fashioned newspaper headquarters. The library stacks and dark paneling, the vaulted ceilings, Gothic moldings, and stained-glass transoms, lend a studious, almost academic air to the place. Arthur was here in the most carefully preserved part of our building to play out the most sacred of *Times* rituals: the succession from one executive editor to another. He said without fanfare that the current executive editor, Joe Lelyveld, would retire, ahead of schedule, by the end of the following September. During the next two months, Arthur said, he intended to meet separately with Bill Keller, the managing editor, and with me, the editorial-page editor, to determine who should be the next executive editor. He would spend May reflecting on the decision, and in June he would announce one of us as the new executive editor.

Since I thought the paper was becoming duller, slower, and more uneven in quality with every passing day, I suggested that the transition happen sooner. Arthur laughed and said I had no idea how hard it had been to get Joe to fix a retirement date at all.

I knew Arthur well enough not to push him. The

timetable reflected his disciplined faith in process, a faith based in large part on his view that his father and predecessor as publisher, Arthur O. (Punch) Sulzberger Sr., had, for all his virtues, managed the paper in a rather relaxed way. Arthur's insistence on always having at least two candidates for an important job sprang from watching Punch make major personnel decisions. Arthur felt that Walter Mattson, the top business manager at the *Times* for many years, had timed his retirement, in 1992, so that Punch would have no choice but to appoint Mattson's protégé, Lance Primis, as president. Primis was ill-prepared for the job, and was fired in 1996. Although the outcome was much happier, Arthur also felt that his father had had no real choice but to pick Max Frankel as executive editor in 1986, since Abe Rosenthal had carefully avoided training a successor. In anticipation of this latest turnover in the top spot, Arthur had urged Joe Lelyveld to groom at least one potential successor to run against me. The winnowing process began in 1997, when the managing editor's job became open. For a while Gerald Boyd, an assistant managing editor who in 1993 became the first black person listed on the editorial masthead of the *Times*, was courted for the job. After a series of discussions and country weekends with Gerald, Joe picked Bill Keller, then the foreign editor, to be the managing editor and, by clear implication, the other candidate for the executive-editor sweepstakes. Gerald felt that he had been misled by the familial atmosphere. The night that Joe told Gerald he was out of the running, as they sat having dinner at a local restaurant, Joe had to physically restrain Gerald to keep him from walking out. Joe re-enacted for me the scene in which he clung to Gerald's arm and said in a dramatic tone, "I need you." Finally Gerald relented and took his seat.

Such moments pass for drama in the great gossip machine that is *The New York Times*, but the real dramas are rarely played out in such public places. Critical decisions turn on more private moments and more subtle moves and counter-moves. Close students of *Times* history know that in 1976 both Abe Rosenthal and Max Frankel sat down to write memos on what they would do as executive editor. Max, by his own account, dashed his off. Abe retreated to a Caribbean island, where he devoted a week to writing a memo that has entered *Times* legend as a masterly analysis of the *Times's* weaknesses and an aggressive strategic plan for fixing them and guiding the paper's future.

In anticipation of such an exercise I had been studying the paper's journalistic soft spots, audience demographics, and circulation-and-advertising-revenue troubles intensively since it became clear, in the early 1990s, that I might have a chance at the top job. So my first question to Arthur that wintry day was whether he would require memos from Bill and me about our visions for the paper. Arthur said there was no need for that; he knew us well already, and would learn the rest of what he needed to know for his decision over a couple of dinners with each of us.

The first of my two dinners with Arthur was at a quiet table in front of an indoor waterfall at Aquavit, the Scandinavian restaurant on West Fifty-fourth Street. I had decided that my central theme would be that a visionary publisher (as I believed Arthur was) could not afford a passive or rigidly traditionalist executive editor. I started with a qualification: of course every executive editor's threshold task was to be a steward of the paper's integrity and reputation. But the first executive editor appointed at the start of the twenty-first century would face a challenge unlike that of any of his predecessors. That challenge was to extend *New York Times*-quality journalism across the Internet, television, and book-publishing platforms while at the same time making the daily and Sunday papers into truly national newspapers—good enough to greatly expand our circulation reach within the quality-print audience. At the moment, whether we liked it or not, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* were better than the *Times* at editing for a national audience that was, for example, interested in both foreign policy and the Super Bowl, both Medicare funding and the constantly shifting American youth culture. Even the *Financial Times*, a relative newcomer to the United States, was finding its national voice. That meant, in a nutshell, that the new editor had to wake and shake the newsroom.

For people who have worked at other newspapers, the biggest shock upon coming to the *Times* is that the level of talent is not higher than it is. Actually, it would be more accurate to say the level of applied talent.

Arthur and most members of his corporate leadership team understood that the modern *New York Times* had to conceive of itself not simply as a newspaper—that is, printed words carried on dead pine trees—but as a carefully assembled packet of information that was agnostic about how it traveled. Indeed, the fact that print newspapers were proving more long-lived than most futurists had predicted offered us a grace period in which to prepare for our digital future, whatever its shape. We were already behind in this task. If we continued to dither, the *Times*'s economic lifespan—and most certainly its aspirations to be a national and perhaps an international publication—would be cut short whenever print newspapers died.

If memory serves, Arthur was working his way through his customary Grey Goose martini as we surveyed the landscape for change. I was sticking to white wine, wanting to be sharp for the moment when Arthur would be mellow

enough to listen to something he might not want to hear.

Up until now you have been given passive cooperation in regard to television and the Internet, I said, knowing Arthur's memory would reach back to the countless meetings about broadcast and digital projects that had elicited little more than feigned interest and reflexive murmurs of assent from officials of the newsroom. You should not make me executive editor unless you want the newsroom to shift gears to an active and aggressive mode.

I was, of course, reminding him of what he already knew, whether or not he cared to admit it. The top editors at the time had given lip service to our new future-oriented divisions, New York Times Digital and New York Times Television, but they regarded every cent spent there as a loss for the print paper. Money is the oxygen of journalism, and every time Arthur turned away, a heavy foot was back on the breathing tube between the print newsroom and the Web site, which depended on the newsroom for content. This combination of counterfeit cooperation and penny-pinching would lead us to an entirely predictable outcome. When the day came—as it inevitably would—that Internet revenues were important to the *Times*'s survival, whether in two years or ten years or twenty years, our Web site would not be good enough to attract elite subscribers or quality advertisers.

But this would be only half the battle. Arthur's next executive editor also needed to understand the anomaly inherent in this period of *Times* history. The paper's eyes and efforts had to be fixed on the future, yet all that strategic planning would be for naught if we did not quickly stop the decline of our trademark products, the daily and Sunday newspapers. That meant stripping away the New York parochialism—an editing perspective that made our national edition a matter more of cosmetics than of substance. Further, it meant aiming our papers at a national audience that was catholic in its interests and worldly in its tastes.

This put on the table something that Arthur and I had long discussed. A managerial reformation would have to take place in the *Times* newsroom if our paper was to meet the information needs and expectations of the country's smartest, most affluent readers. Already *The Wall Street Journal*'s new Weekend Journal section—a compendium of culture, lifestyle, health, and travel stories designed to appeal especially to professional women—was threatening our hold on that vital readership group.

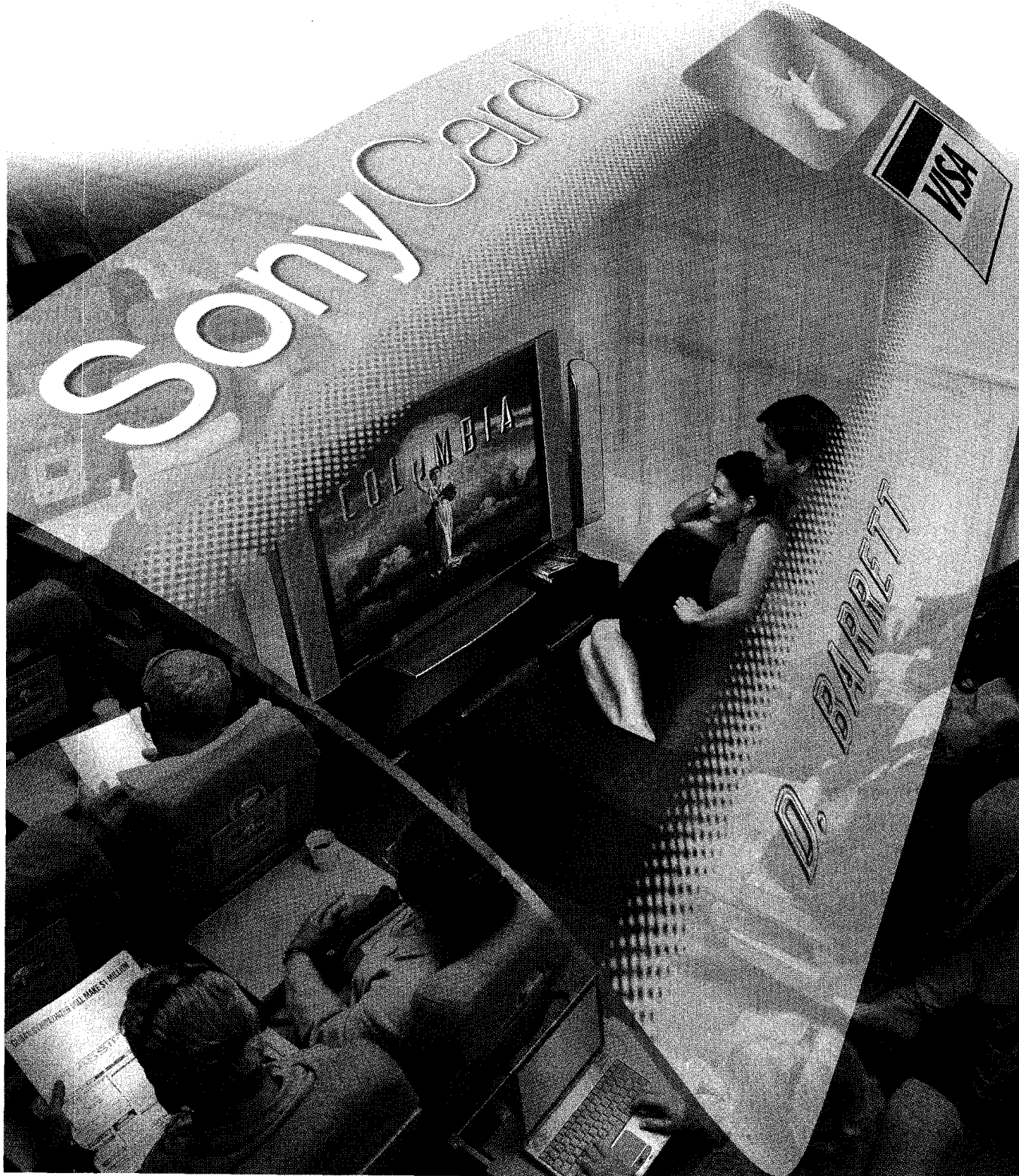
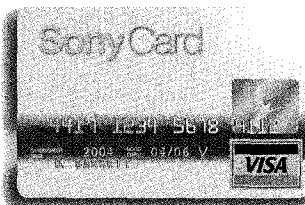
One of Arthur's strengths is the ability to hear bad news or implicit criticism without becoming defensive. The paper's uneven quality, I told him, was due to its current system of what I called "silo management"—putting too many journalistic decisions into the hands of a restricted group of editors. That system had emerged in our newsroom over the previous decade, keeping scores of the *Times*'s most talented journalists from participating in the daily report.

We both knew that the question of improving the paper's

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quality—and thus its marketability—was not an academic one. The *Times* as a corporation would die without the revenues it receives from display advertising, and the trend lines were alarming. As for circulation, it had peaked at 1.2 million daily and 1.8 million for the Sunday edition in the early 1990s. Now the paper had been stalled for several years at 1.1 million daily, and the Sunday edition had slipped as low as 1.6 million in 1998. Since then the *Times* has promoted heavily to get the paper back to nearly 1.7 million. The newsroom continued to blame the circulation department for stagnant readership figures, but the fact was that the department had improved significantly in recent years. The *Times* was holding on financially as well as it was because of the astute work of two talented managers: Russell Lewis, who is retiring as corporate CEO at the end of this year, and Janet L. Robinson, the senior vice-president of the newspaper division, who will succeed Lewis as CEO. It was long-standing custom in the newsroom to blame our lack of growth on the business side. My analysis led me to a different conclusion, which could not be mentioned to my senior editorial colleagues without triggering a heresy trial: our business side had harvested all the growth it could from the paper we were giving it to peddle to subscribers and advertisers. If we were going to get more readers and make more money, the daily and Sunday *New York Times* simply had to get better—a lot better.

The demographic reality was that our readers—and the millions of educated, affluent people who ought to read the *Times* but do not—had grown smarter, more sophisticated, and broader in their range of curiosities and interests than the *Times* had. The Sunday paper had a declining circulation because for the previous four years its front page, and key sections, including Arts & Leisure, had gone from predictable to dull to stultifying. One of our dirty little in-house secrets was that even we, who were paid to read it, often couldn't hack the Sunday paper. As for the daily paper, we had to face the fact that entire sections were essentially unmanaged, their staffs unsupervised and unchallenged creatively by anyone outside their own departments.

These unenticing papers were the product of a laissez-faire editorial world in which only the two residents of Silo No. 1, the executive editor and the managing editor, and the people in Silo No. 2, the individual desk editors covering foreign, national, local, cultural, sports, and lifestyle news, had any authority over the content of the paper. Those in between—a high-ranking group of about a half dozen that included deputy and assistant managing editors who were all listed on the masthead and whose compensation packages could run as high as half a million dollars a year—had been frozen out of the creative process and any meaningful managerial responsibilities. They were paid to oversee the various desks and departments, but the reality of the system was that the desk and department editors felt free to ignore their ideas and suggestions. An even larger group of senior and associate managing editors had been shelved in what

one of them called “*trompe l'oeil* jobs,” which carried grand titles, good salaries, and little authority.

The silo system was no accident. It had grown out of my predecessor's distaste for the managerial styles of the paper's previous executive editors. Abe Rosenthal was “a maniac for the *Times*,” as he called himself in our first conversation. That meant that he was a tireless perfectionist and that he and a squad of handpicked senior editors had a finger in everything. Max Frankel was more inclined to delegate to a larger group of close associates, but he had refined tastes and a rapacious curiosity about every aspect of American society. In their different ways, both Abe and Max had demonstrated that a newspaper as comprehensive as the *Times* had to be the product of many minds and also had to reflect the guiding sensibility of an engaged, activist executive editor.

When you talk about the *Times*'s superior resources, you are really talking about its storehouse of brainpower—layers of seasoned correspondents and editors whose teamwork produced an additive journalism that got better at each level. Abe and Max operated through clusters of senior editors (about six for Abe, about ten for Max) described above. Max called his group the Ex Com (short for “executive committee”). Newsroom wags called Abe's team “the Wallendas,” after the aerial acrobats, because they tumbled frantically into action the moment that Abe gave the word. But they were an essential link between the executive editor and the desk editors, and they bore the main intellectual responsibility for shaping the daily report. This system was designed to encourage the paper's most experienced journalists to provide general guidance on the daily report and to spot significant holes in the paper's overall coverage while also planning medium- and long-range strategy. The essence of the executive editor's job is to see over the horizon and, to the greatest possible degree, deploy resources according to where the top editor thinks the news is going, rather than merely reacting to what has already occurred.

Desk editors sometimes chafed under this system, I know—as Washington editor, I was one of them for four years. But the system worked insofar as it leveraged the *Times*'s advantage of having superior numbers of really smart people. Desk editors had to do a good job of independently putting together their daily sections or the whole system would collapse. They and their reporters make journalism in the same way that field-grade officers and line troops win battles. But desk editors caught in the cut and thrust of daily competition need someone to hold them accountable for their performance every day and to plan strategies that look beyond today's deadlines.

The layered, iterative system that had worked so well for the *Times* ceased to exist when Joe Lelyveld and his first managing editor, Gene Roberts, publicly stripped the assistant managing editors (“the masthead,” in *Times* parlance) of their responsibilities. In Silo No. 1 the two top editors sometimes involved themselves in the minutiae of the daily report

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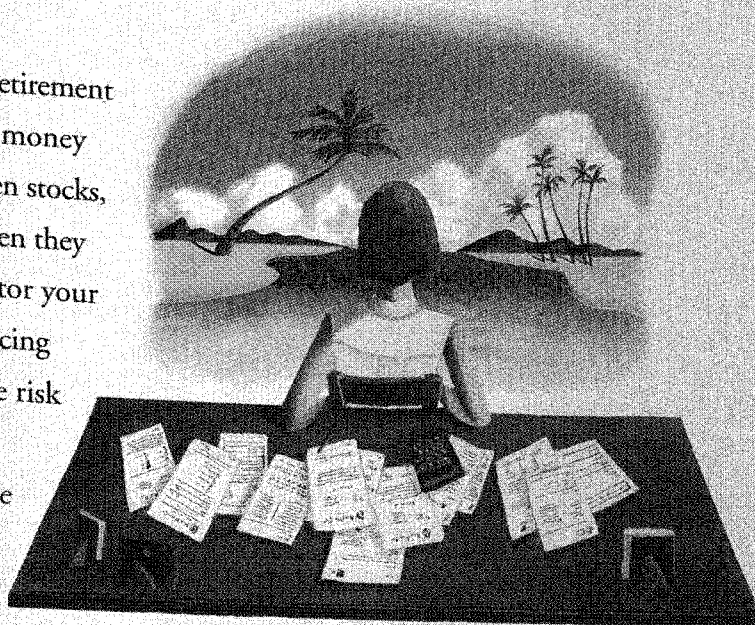
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to such a degree that the executive editor came to be known, behind his back, as the “executive copy editor.” They alone had the authority to plan broader strategy for the desk editors. By and large, however, the desk editors operated independently, in their own silo, and this meant that the quality of the daily paper varied greatly from desk to desk. Energetic desk editors produced energetic reports. Lazy or unimaginative desk editors produced lazy and unimaginative reports, giving the paper a very uneven quality overall.

At dinner with Arthur, I emphasized the fundamental need for an executive editor who drove the paper to move quickly and comprehensively on major stories, rather than one who simply presided over the desk editors and assembled what they turned in every day. I wasn’t prepared to tell him that someone else couldn’t do the job, but I knew damn well that I could, and every experience I had had since joining the *Birmingham Post-Herald*, in 1964, had prepared me for this position. Target selection and execution are the essence of strategic editing. I recalled walking through my father’s manufacturing plant, where furnishings for retail stores were made, and recognizing his ability to assemble a finished interior out of random stacks of lumber and barrels of varnish. He knew the job of every worker there. He had started out at fourteen chopping crossties, and had become a skilled cabinetmaker and then an executive whose showcases could be found at Saks and Lord & Taylor. He loved fine woodworking the way I loved newspapers. I knew early on in my life that I would never experience the feelings my father did if I accepted his invitation to enter the family business. It wasn’t in my blood. I had found my own calling in making daily newspapers out of the chaos of daily existence. My greatest joy in newspapering came from the quarter of a century that I worked at the *Times* with the most talented staff in the business. My greatest frustration was that the *Times* was seldom as good as it could have been, given its advantages in money and prestige over other papers. I wanted more than anything to see a *New York Times* that lived up to its legend.

Needless to say, as Arthur and I talked over arctic char and baked cod in that starkly modern restaurant, neither of us could have imagined that in a little more than two years a young, relatively unknown reporter named Jayson Blair would figure prominently in the derailment of the managerial reformation for which we were laying the tracks. That’s the real import of the Blair saga—not the loss of my job or that of my managing editor, Gerald Boyd, as painful as these events have been for both of us. As Arthur later told the Siegal Committee, which I had appointed just before my resignation to investigate how Jayson Blair’s tainted stories had slipped through the *Times*’s multi-layered editing system, he had named me executive editor because he thought the newsroom needed change. Arthur and I shared the belief that business as usual—including the attitude that the *Times* didn’t have to descend to the foul

rag-and-bone shop of daily competition with other news organizations—was dangerous business.

THE LESSONS OF TURNER CATLEDGE

I learned of Arthur’s decision to appoint me executive editor on a cool, misty Monday afternoon in May of 2001. He was grimacing with pain as he greeted me at the front door of his Central Park West apartment. He explained that he was home from work because he was down in the back. Leaning heavily on a cane, he shuffled along in old boat shoes, leading me through the familiar living room and out onto a narrow balcony overlooking the park, which spread before us in its crisp spring foliage. The balcony was barely large enough to hold two chairs from the dining room. I thought of what fun the tabloids would have if we were wiped out in one of New York’s periodic balcony collapses.

There are two ways to do this, Arthur said—the fast way and the slow way. He preferred the former. I’d like you to be the next executive editor of the *Times*, he said.

I accepted, and quickly resisted Arthur’s suggestion that I keep Bill Keller on as managing editor. I respected Bill but felt that the staff would interpret his staying in place as a signal that I planned to preserve the status quo. Another factor was that there was no personal chemistry between Bill and me. I also wanted to see, as Arthur himself needed to, what Gerald Boyd could do in a high-demand situation. But the overriding factor was that I knew that executive editors quickly lose the political capital that comes with an inauguration, and I wanted to give the newsroom a shot of energy from day one and then roll through a section-by-section revitalization.

As a student of *Times* history, Arthur understood the need for early momentum. As a student of that same history, I realized that I would be the last executive editor who knew personally everyone who had held that title. I met Turner Catledge near the end of his life, in 1978 (the title of executive editor had been created for him in 1964), and I came to consider his memoir, *My Life and The Times*, essential reading for anyone who sought to understand the resistance to change at the paper. I worked alongside James B. “Scotty” Reston in Washington, and came to know him well as an avuncular figure who was as tough as goat guts in his analysis of staff weaknesses. When a correspondent who had clerked for Scotty and later boasted of their closeness left the paper to protest a reassignment, Scotty dropped by my office. I was then the Washington editor, and I assumed he was going to chide me for not giving the fellow the prestige beat he thought he deserved. Instead Scotty blew out a cloud of pipe smoke and said, He never had it, did he? At its highest levels the *Times* operates by that kind of brutal managerial shorthand; nevertheless, established, clubbable under-achievers are usually given sinecures rather than being encouraged to leave.

I was hired by Abe Rosenthal, and appointed to run the

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A black and white photograph of a person in profile, looking down at a globe. The background is a blurred cityscape at night with many lights. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt.

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Washington bureau by Max Frankel. They were both impatient men who were bracingly difficult to satisfy, and who had in common few traits other than a reverence for talent and a determination to rapidly advance the people who had it. I learned a great deal from both of them—not only about how strongly the *Times* valued its reputation for integrity but also about the need to push constantly for modernization and acceleration of the news report.

The grand theme of change to bring the *Times* to its full potential is braided through the paper's history; every publisher and executive editor since Catledge has embraced it, or at least paid lip service to it. Such change is always and quite properly defined as being in accord with the traditional *Times* standards of taste, honesty, and accuracy. Yet it is striking that for more than sixty years the view of the *Times* as an inalterable citadel of stodginess has had its strongest hold on the public and on the rank-and-file reporters and editors, rather than on the paper's leadership.

***Times* people have a love-hate relationship with their employer. They glory in their association with the institution, yet they despise their dependence on the money, security, cachet, and illusion of power that make leaving almost impossible.**

At the same time, the temptation to preside over rather than challenge the staff can be very strong, because little risk is involved. The staff is so good that even when the paper is running at a relaxed pace, it will seldom slip below a tolerable level of quality; an executive editor can usually get passing marks from his publisher by simply going with the flow. In this regard the *Times* is like a big canoe. If you sit calmly in the bottom and don't rock it, the canoe will carry you safely down the river.

The changes implemented by previous *Times* regimes have been at once straightforward and elusive. Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Punch's father, who had married into the publisher's job and held it with distinction from 1935 until 1961, wanted one united and interconnected paper rather than a collection of fiefdoms that conducted a nightly contest over whether, say, the Washington bureau or New York, the editor in chief or the anonymous midnight power brokers in the bullpen, would control the content and style of the paper. One of the most important alliances in *Times* history was that forged between Sulzberger and Turner Catledge. By 1945 Catledge had become a powerless and frustrated assistant managing editor, trapped between turf-conscious desk heads and the night-side autocrats. Catledge

wrote later of his fear that "the paper's continued preeminence" would be destroyed by its warring newsroom "dukedom," its "smug" insistence on tradition as the overriding article of faith, and its "unnecessary stodginess in the way the news was reported and written." When confronted with such arguments by Catledge, the paper's elegant and laid-back managing editor, Edwin L. "Dressy" James, replied, "Why change? We're doing all right, aren't we?" The system that suited James was, amazingly, one in which he was forbidden to play any role in planning the Sunday paper or in making up the front page.

During World War II, Sulzberger invited Catledge to tour United States military installations in the Pacific with him. On that trip they discussed their joint conviction that once the war ended, *Times* readers would no longer accept the hidebound news judgment and acres of gray prose that the paper had offered in the 1920s and 1930s. Sulzberger wanted to replace James with Catledge, but felt it would be too disruptive within the Sulzberger-Ochs ownership family, because James had been a favorite of the previous publisher, Adolph Ochs. In 1951, when James had weakened enough to be shunted aside, Sulzberger appointed Catledge to the newly created position of executive managing editor. The enhanced title signaled that Catledge would be the first top editor in *Times* history with the explicit authority to plan news stories on the dayside and to instruct the night-side editors on how to play them. On his way up the editorial ladder Catledge warred with David Joseph, a change-averse city editor who was given to hiring three reporters to do the work of one, and kept most of them sitting around the city room waiting for a story whose magnitude was worthy of a major *Times* deployment. Catledge also bristled at the paper's lifetime-employment policies. "No one was ever fired at the *Times*," Catledge complained in his memoir. "God was our personnel director."

In the face of staff opposition, Catledge insisted that a modern newspaper must have "a dual appeal," telling readers both what they need to know and what they would enjoy knowing. "First, it should be necessary to people who wanted to be well informed," he wrote. "It already was that. Second, it should be a paper people wanted to read, for pleasure as well as out of necessity." Too often, Catledge added, *Times* readers were forced to pick up the paper and say, "I'm going to read you, you son of a bitch, if it kills me!"

There was a perfect congruence between Catledge's postwar assessment and the lessons we were learning from demographic surveys of our post-millennium audience. Catledge and Sulzberger had grasped intuitively the emergence of a more sophisticated postwar readership, which expected newspapers not only to provide the news of the day but also to bring intellectual pleasure through good writing, good graphics, and well-crafted social-interest stories that illuminated modern life. In a sense the entire history of the *Times* after World War II can be seen as a struggle to

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keep up with an audience that was getting smarter and more broad-gauged in its interests, and that was doing so more rapidly than was the newsroom on West Forty-third Street.

THE NEW DEMOGRAPHICS

Like most newspaper journalists of my generation, I was allergic for most of my career to the business side of newspapering. During a journalism seminar in the mid-1990s I was asked by a young reporter how much longer the American newspaper as we knew it would last. I replied that I didn't know—that all I needed was a dozen or so years, which was how long I had until retirement. It was ironic, then, that many of the strategic discussions that Arthur and I had at our dinners centered on the challenge of strengthening the *Times* as a business enterprise—a goal we agreed would be best achieved by making the paper's journalism more broadly and consistently excellent.

My flippancy about the business side had abated over the years as I watched, with increasing alarm, chain ownership wring higher profits out of local newspapers by cutting the newsroom budgets on which sound journalism depends. The *Times*'s image as a bastion of quality had become even more important as tabloid television, Britain's declining newspaper values, and the unsourced ranting of Internet bloggers polluted the journalistic mainstream of the United States.

The reforms Arthur and I talked about were based on the presumption that the economic future of the *Times* would be in peril if the paper kept playing the same tunes in its journalism and its business investments. Like most other employees, I had long taken the paper as an immutable fixture of American life. As we celebrated the *Times*'s 150th birthday, in 2001, Arthur pointed out that a century and a half was an unusually advanced age, even for successful businesses. Very few make it past fifty years.

Since the mid-1970s I had been going to conferences at which futurists such as jolly old Herman Kahn, of the Hudson Institute, predicted that the American newspaper would soon be dead. Now, like Groucho's doctors, the futurists all seem to be dead themselves. The print paper is still the economic engine of The New York Times Company, and even of some more-diversified media companies. The *Times* exceeded \$1 billion in annual print-advertising revenues in 1998. But ad sales peaked at \$1.3 billion in 2000 and have now settled back into the \$1.1 billion range. If those ad revenues were to drop much below that mark, the *Times* as a business would be severely strapped. Such a

situation could lead to a forced sale once the voting stock controlled by the seventy-eight-year-old Punch, who is now the chairman emeritus, and his three older sisters is inherited by a group of nieces, nephews, and cousins (and their spouses) now numbering about sixty.

That specter was in the air when Arthur invited the Viacom president and broadcasting buccaneer Mel Karmazin to address one of our annual meetings of the business and editorial staffs. After hearing a quick explanation of our financial structure, Karmazin was asked what he would do if he owned *The New York Times*. Without missing a beat he said, "Sell it." Karmazin was speaking as a moneyman. He saw a prestige brand that seemed to be at or near its peak value and to be facing an uncertain future.

Karmazin did not know the half of it. The *Times* has staked its future on being a national newspaper, but the basic

daily circulation figure—slightly more than a million papers in a nation of 290 million—is distressing. A *Times* marketing survey in the 1990s showed that there were more than 40 million "like-minded nonreaders" in the country—a group defined as people who ought to read the *Times* but don't. A later survey increased that group's projected number to more than 80 million. Whichever figure you accept, the lesson is that the *Times* is leaving millions of copies and millions of dollars on the table every year. The research also demonstrated that the identity of potential *Times* readers was no longer determined by geography—this was a truly national

audience, defined by a few specific characteristics relating to education, income, profession, and intellectual or avocational interests. In short, the *Times* was going after the smartest and most affluent people in the United States and finding, at best, only a fortieth of them.

My plan was to look closely at the categories into which *Times* readers broke down and to examine how well we were meeting their information needs. As it happens, at the time roughly one third of the *Times*'s circulation was in New York City proper, one third in the tri-state (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut) megalopolis, and one third in the rest of the country. As observed above, our metro and national editions were essentially the same once you got past such things as bumping a picture of Mayor Michael Bloomberg off the front page for the national press run. Our problem was that we were offering one-size-fits-all journalism to very different audiences.

Moreover, I did not accept the conventional wisdom



that we had reached the limits of our circulation growth in the New York area. The reason we weren't increasing our base, I believed, was that we were ignoring the economic and social realities of many of our local readers' lives—and missing out on incremental circulation gains among our hometown audience. New York is a money town. People work like hell in several clearly defined sectors of the economy: finance, corporate management, real estate, broadcasting, publishing, entertainment, fashion and apparel, pharmaceuticals, and health care. I was confident that we could sell tens of thousands more papers on Wall Street and in places like Greenwich, Connecticut, if our financial coverage was vital enough to make brokers, bankers, or investors feel nervous about skipping the *Times*. We had surrendered a lot of territory to *The Wall Street Journal* by deciding that the *Journal* was the unassailable “first read” for inhabitants of the business world and that it was pointless to mount a serious challenge to its hegemony. While we were backing away from the fight, the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* had crossed the Atlantic to show that it did not matter if you were read first or read fifth, so long as you were an indispensable read.

Another telling lapse in our local-circulation outlook was the failure to recognize that—more than at any time since the days of Emma Lazarus—we are a city of immigrants. The death of the R&B singer Aaliyah in a plane crash in the Bahamas in the summer of 2001 was a huge event in places she had lived, Brooklyn and Detroit, with thousands of black and Latino mourners weeping in the streets. Yet the *Times* had perfunctorily covered her death, because one of our music critics had declared her a minor musician. So what? She was an icon in minority communities. Our lack of penetration in these communities proceeded from the most basic of journalistic reasons: we weren't a reliable source for the information they wanted and needed as their demographic profile changed. Indeed, even as the New York Times Foundation dispenses Ivy League scholarships to second- and third-generation Russians, Puerto Ricans, and Chinese, the paper still acts as if their homes are not *Times* households.

We had to raise the level of our game in New York City, but our biggest gains were to be made as a national newspaper, appealing to readers in the forty-seven states beyond our regional base. That's where the greatest number of like-minded nonreaders were. The Times Company had already made a huge financial bet on a national strategy by building a coast-to-coast network of printing plants and the circulation infrastructure to support them. But our newsroom thinking hadn't caught up with our business thinking. We have good home delivery in Atlanta, for example, but on the morning after the Falcons played in the first NFL tie game in five years, in Pittsburgh, the sports section we delivered to readers in Atlanta carried a lead story about the Giants winning a meaningless game in Minnesota. The Falcons game, which was the talk of ESPN and a lead feature in

USA Today, was covered by the *Times* with a story buried deep inside.

To become a “must read” we had to think about who our readers were. We knew we were producing a paper for intelligent people, but we needed to be more intelligent about who those people were and what they wanted and needed to know. To make those determinations we had to look at the quality of their minds and the nature of their lives. I posited a *New York Times* audience with a Renaissance-like breadth of interests. Serious journalism did not have to be restricted to traditional somber subjects. A reader who hungered for every last detail about the New York Philharmonic would be willing to cross the genre divide to read a story about the role of the downtown nightclub CBGB in the evolution of popular music—provided the article was written at the same level of sophistication.

We had to be as good on popular culture as we were on high culture, as good on, say, the sexualization of childhood in America as we were on the future of the Social Security trust fund. We knew that curiosity is the essence of journalism, but we weren't giving our readers credit for the range of their curiosity. The loftiness of the *Times* is an asset when it comes to standing up to popular opinion or the bullying of government. But when you set out to assemble and connect with the most demanding readers in the world, it is not acceptable to serve them eat-your-peas journalism and insist that they swallow it as a duty of citizenship.

**I knew that I was taking a
pounding in the press and on the
office grapevine, but I also knew,
from observing my predecessors,
that changes of the sort we
planned had to be made
in the morning of an
editorship, not its twilight.**

If you want to reach members of this quality audience who are between the ages of twenty and forty, you have to penetrate the worlds of style and popular culture. If the *Times's* journalism continues to show contempt for the vernacular of those worlds, the paper will continue to lose subscribers. To explore every aspect of American and global experience does not mean pandering. It does mean that the serial ups and downs of a Britney Spears are a sociological and economic phenomenon that is, as a reflection of contemporary American culture, worthy of serious reporting. It means being astute enough about American society to understand that the deadly rap wars have nothing to do with what Snoop Dogg said about Suge Knight. The real story behind the rap wars is one of huge corporations like

Sony and EMI trying to save a multibillion-dollar industry in economic collapse. The rap shootings may not be “a *Times* story” by the traditional definition, but the fact that international media companies are dependent for product on performers and moguls who carry guns and like to whack one another is a story as relevant today as the whiskey wars of Prohibition were in their time.

Another major conclusion I had reached about the paper was that hard news, as important as it was to us, could not drive circulation growth on the scale that was needed. We have had and must always have the best foreign-news reporting in the United States, but in the journalistic competition of the future that was just table stakes. Readers expected that of us in the same way they expected the Yankees to show up in pinstripes and go to the World Series every year. The *Times* has been slow to accept the fact that it faces multiple competitors at every point of the quality scale in print, digital, and broadcast journalism. When *Entertainment Weekly* magazine publishes, as it did in 2001, a more learned article on Tolkien’s influence on directors of mythic films than can be found in our Sunday Arts & Leisure section, that shouts out the fact that the *Times* is back on its heels.

Our coverage of culture, entertainment, style, and travel was in fact a shambles—underfunded, unimaginative, and devoid of any unifying editorial sensibility. The back of the book was a place where, I believed, my literary background, my early experience in Atlanta as a film and theater critic, my lifelong interest in the visual arts, could make a difference. Improving these sections, I had concluded, would be an important way to lure national readers who wanted to use the *Times* to experience the New York-ness of New York—which is to say a point of view that could not be found in their local papers. With the exception of the Sunday magazine, the departments that produced these sections were suffering from more than a decade of hands-off management. In his day Max Frankel had bet heavily that Paul Goldberger, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Times* architecture critic, could be an energizing culture editor. That turned out not to be the case. Since then the daily culture section had drifted, and its editors had been told to make the happiness of the New York-based critics their top priority. The result was that the *Times* had not had a dominating national voice in any area of cultural coverage since Frank Rich retired as theater critic, in the early 1990s.

The hyperkinetic Arthur Gelb, the paper’s culture czar for thirty years and its managing editor in the late 1980s, was thought by many in the newsroom to be over the top. And yet his insistence that the *Times* must offer “the best”—the best music critic, the best food writer, the best wine writer, the best bridge columnist—had given the paper’s back of the book a primacy that had dwindled steadily over the past ten to fifteen years. One important mission I did not get around to was finding the kind of critics capable of becoming trademark names in every field of aesthetic or con-

sumer interest—everything from wines to Broadway. *The New Yorker*, one of our competitors for national readership, had spotted the *Times*’s decline and had staked a claim on a lot of the cultural-criticism territory that was once ours. In the journalism of ideas, literature, and the academy—another traditional *Times* stronghold—we were ceding leadership to *The New York Review of Books* and to magazines like this one.

To catch a terrorist you have to think like a terrorist. To catch and hold a newspaper reader you have to think about what makes a reader buy a paper as *a matter of necessity*. It’s a question of conditioning. *The Wall Street Journal* has conditioned bankers and brokers and others in the business world to think that it contains information essential to making money. *The Washington Post* has conditioned readers inside the Beltway to think of it as a must read on national politics and the inner workings of the federal government. *USA Today* has made serious inroads persuading fans of professional and major college sports that it is the paper of record for competitive athletics.

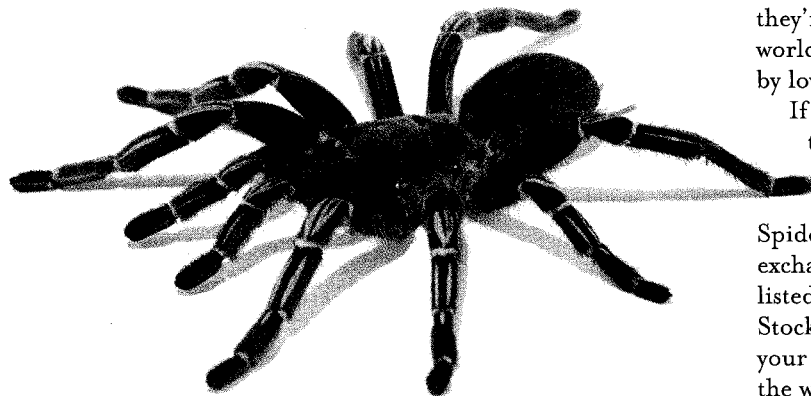
But unlike the *Journal*, the *Times* does not have the luxury of being a niche publication. Unlike *The Washington Post*, the *Times* does not have the luxury of thinking of itself as the local paper for a one-industry town. The far more challenging key to growth for the *Times*—in print circulation and in profitable visibility on television and the Internet—lies in becoming a must read in every interest area. But that is especially hard to do when in recent years the *Times* has conditioned, say, the businessman or the sports fan or the literature professor that the sections of special interest to him or her can for the most part safely be missed.

LESSONS FROM YEAR ONE

I spent the summer of 2001, the months between the announcement of my appointment and its official beginning, studying the newsroom at the *Times*. The effects of silo management and official neglect were more pervasive than I feared. I instituted a daily meeting of the masthead editors and found that after years of being ignored, some people who had once been aswirl with adventurous ideas were now suffering a creative atrophy. Because the desk editors had been inadequately supervised for so long, the more aggressive of them had learned to use bad temper as a tool for bullying their colleagues in battles for turf and personnel. Others were resorting to the demeaning managerial tactic of trying to win popularity with their staffs by demonizing “them”—the senior editors in New York who sometimes bounced stories back as unsatisfactory. On one extraordinary evening a desk editor had a managerial meltdown in response to normal deadline demands from the news desk and wept in front of the staff that was looking to this person for leadership. We had only a few writers who understood the architecture of the “lede-all story,” the comprehensive article in the right-hand column that had been a distinctive and glorious feature of *Times* journalism since

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World War II. Political reporters had been discouraged from writing analytical stories on the grounds that readers did not have time for them. The story editors and line editors on the copy desks, who made up the backbone of the *Times* when I joined the paper, were in despair and disarray, as a result of unrealistically heavy workloads and being shifted from desk to desk with no time to do homework. Meanwhile, reporters with normal or even light workloads were resisting assignments that required the fast turnarounds and mobility that had long been defining skills of top correspondents. Another disturbing development, for which I was unprepared, was that a small enclave of neoconservative editors was making accusations of “political correctness” in order to block stories or slant them against minorities and traditional social-welfare programs.

On my first day as executive editor I put a copy of my college classmate Charles Gaines’s 1972 novel *Stay Hungry* in plain sight on my desk. The title announces the novel’s theme—stay hungry for what life can bring. Its application to every newspaper’s daily challenges was obvious. It also had a private resonance, reminding me of how my father had once chided me and my well-uniformed YMCA baseball teammates for ridiculing a ragtag team from the Alabama countryside. Remember this, he said before the game: a hungry ballplayer can beat you.

In retrospect, I underestimated the difficulties of inculcating in others my passion for breaking stories that other

news organizations had to follow, or that were so inherently interesting that no engaged reader was likely to pass them up. We wanted to accustom readers to expect those kinds of stories in the *Times*. Newsroom dissidents complained that we were turning them into ambulance chasers—which was of course the opposite of what we wanted. We wanted the *Times* to be in the business of offering stories that were not obvious to the pack. But the idea of staying hungry probably insulted more people than it inspired.

These debates over reportorial hunger would become a leitmotif of my editorship, but only after the first six months. On my sixth day as executive editor the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon rendered temporarily moot any concerns I had about the energy level of the newsroom. The *Times* was fortunate that coverage of these tragic and epic events, and of the subsequent anthrax scare and Afghan war, fell mainly to our two strongest departments—foreign and metro—and to a couple of others that we were able to shore up in time to be effective.

To my mind, the signal accomplishment of Joe Lelyveld as executive editor was strengthening and enlarging the metropolitan staff, whose editor, Jon Landman, was also the best organizer among our desk heads. The foreign staff, as always, was full of talent. Although we had a novice editor there in Roger Cohen, he was a gifted veteran reporter and among the two or three best foreign-policy thinkers on the paper. We worked closely with him on pre-positioning his reporters for the Afghan war. Having directed our Gulf War coverage from Washington in 1991, I was determined not to let the Pentagon seal us off from the battlefield as effectively as Dick Cheney, then the Secretary of Defense, and Colin Powell, then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had sealed us off from Operation Desert Storm. To bolster our Afghanistan-infiltration team I borrowed a page from Bear Bryant, the legendary football coach at the University of Alabama, and began searching the metro bench for “hungry ballplayers” who were restless for their moment to shine. One such bench warmer I found was David Rohde, who had won a Pulitzer Prize covering the war in Bosnia for *The Christian Science Monitor*, but who since joining the *Times* had languished on the city staff because he had somehow gotten crosswise with his bosses.

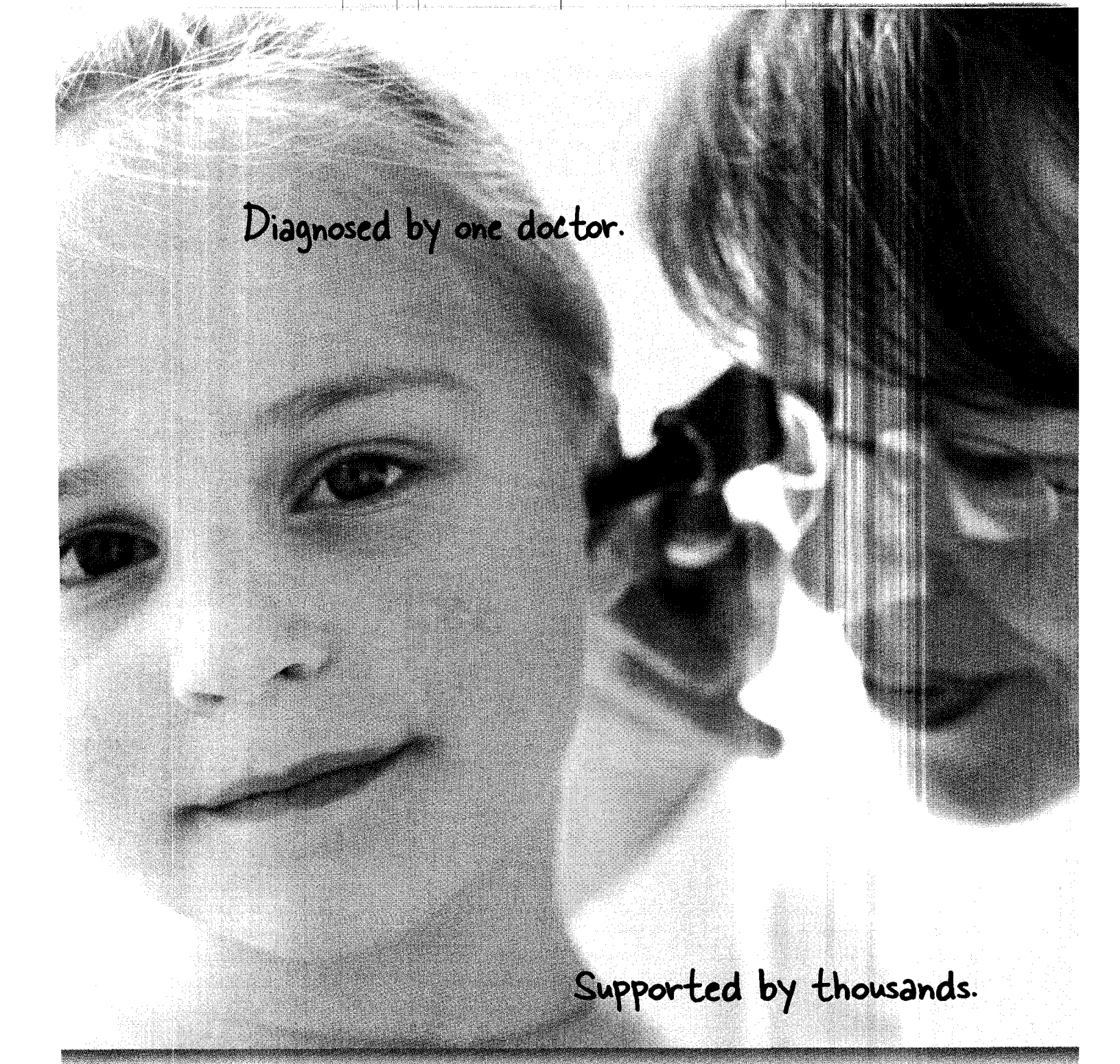
The summer homework paid off in an unexpected way. At a brown-bag lunch with the *Times* photographers I learned of their outrage that the paper had often used wire-service photos on wars and other major foreign events. That’s where the top prizes in photojournalism were won, they argued, pointing out that the *Detroit Free Press* had earned a Pulitzer because it had flown its own photographer over to Germany during the fall of the Berlin Wall rather than relying on the Associated Press and Agence France-Presse, as the *Times* had done. As it happened, R. W. Apple, the veteran Washington correspondent and food writer, had brought me a souvenir chip of concrete from the wall. During

DEAD WREN

Opening your little gothic wings
on my whitewashed chest of drawers,
I almost fear you, as if today were my funeral.
Moment by moment, enzymes digest
your life into a kind of coffin liqueur.
Two flies, like coroners, investigate your feathers.
My clock is your obelisk, though only this morning
you lunged into my room, extravagant as Nero,
then, not seeing yourself in the sunlit glass,
struck it. Night—what beams does it clear away?
The rain falls. The sky is pained. All that breathes suffers.
Yet the waters of affliction are purifying.
The wounded soldier heals. There is new wine and oil.
Here, take my handkerchief as your hearse.

—HENRI COLE

Henri Cole's most recent collection of poems, Middle Earth (2003), received the Kingsley-Tufts Poetry Award. He is the poet in residence at Smith College.



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those peaceful days of summer I told the photographers that on my first morning as executive editor I would put that fragment of the Berlin Wall on my desk to remind me that they would go to the next war. It came sooner than any of us expected, and the *Times's* brilliant staff photographs from the Afghan war and Ground Zero captured Pulitzers for both news and feature photography—two of the record seven Pulitzers the paper won in 2002, five of which were for 9/11 and war coverage.

For as long as I'm alive I'll be proud of the impact the *Times* photographers had on our profession. Eddie Adams, the reigning guru of American news-photo workshops, said that the *Times* had reinvented newspaper photojournalism. Critics at *Artforum* magazine cited the *Times's* dramatic treatment of photographs as one of the most significant developments of 2001 in the visual arts.

In the aftermath of 9/11 the *Times* staff ran like sprinters for months on end. It was the most inspirational performance I've ever seen. I wouldn't trade those first six months for another decade as executive editor.

The papers we produced were hailed for their visual power, but it was the written content that accounted for the extent of our Pulitzer sweep. While going at a dead run to cover the fast-breaking news of the post-9/11 period, Jon Landman and a group of his editors and reporters invented the "Portraits of Grief" series. Those thumbnail sketches of every person who had died in the World Trade Center disaster became, in effect, a national shrine, and were a strong ingredient of the special daily section "A Nation Challenged," which we published for the last quarter of 2001. That special section helped the *Times* win the Pulitzer Board's highest honor: the award for public service.

I've never worked with greater pride or been more eager to get to the office each day than in those frantic months between 9/11 and the end of the Afghan war. It was during that tumultuous period that we took the first steps toward installing a more broad-based management and editing system in place of the silos. In putting out "A Nation Challenged" we sometimes gathered as many as twenty-five people—not just text editors but also designers and artists, layout and photo editors, long treated as second-class citizens—around the big table where we selected and organized stories and photographs. In thirty-nine years of newspapering I've never seen so large a staff rise to so high a level of effort and intensity for so long a time. A few days into the 9/11 story I sent out a memo urging all members of the staff to get some rest and

spend time with their families, noting that a story of this magnitude was a marathon, not a sprint. The fact is, though, that the *Times* staff ran like sprinters for months on end. It was the most inspirational performance I've ever seen. Nothing that has happened since can dim the luster of those memories. I wouldn't trade those first six months for another decade as executive editor.

In that first year I also learned, perhaps not well enough, about the competing demands on an executive editor. Inside the paper you must meet the expectations of the publisher and give direction to the masthead by being a cold-eyed critic of the daily news report. But in public you have to be a constant cheerleader for the whole staff, many of whom think of themselves as an oppressed minority, even though some of them are among the country's best-paid journalists.

That *Times* people tend to have a love-hate relationship with their employer is no secret inside the paper or within New York's chattering classes. To some degree this is true of newsrooms everywhere, but at the *Times* the feeling of ambivalence seems chronic, even feverish. *Times* people glory in their association with the institution, yet they despise their dependence on the money, security, cachet, and illusion of power that make leaving almost impossible. Like the French, New Englanders, Southerners, Idaho survivalists, or Mormon polygamists, they take a perverse pride in their idiosyncrasies and tend to make iconic "characters" of those who embody the tribal pathology in its purest form.

These newsroom characters are regarded less as role models than as holy fools whose wisdom, no matter how wacky, is still magical and oracular. For example, some of the weakest writers on the paper are opinion leaders on questions of style and copy editing. Great value is placed on the act of "speaking truth to power," with little regard for the substance or factuality of what is spoken. The newsroom characters pride themselves on their flair for gossip, a predilection that has been greatly enhanced by e-mail. (Their avidity for it is undiminished by the universal institutional awareness that on any given personnel or organizational question at the *Times*, at most half a dozen people in the entire building know what's really going on.) As a group, they tend to be politically liberal in regard to the government's domestic policies, conservative in regard to the location of their desks, rebellious in regard to the *Times* stylebook, and anarchic in regard to the paper's management.

Every executive editor has been frustrated by the *Times* grapevine, and Arthur sometimes comes across as Wile E. Coyote, so elaborate and endlessly hopeful are his schemes to thwart the gossip network. Max Frankel once pointed out what I regard as the defining characteristic of this aspect of the *Times* newsroom. No matter how much most people on the newsroom floor love working at the *Times*, their professional loyalties do not flow to the institution, much less to its news executives. As in the medieval guilds, their loyalties tend to flow outward toward their peers on one or another

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publication, no matter how debased that publication's principles or how craven its ownership. That is why every executive editor who has tried to shake the dust of tradition from the *Times* finds himself assaulted in other publications with blind quotations attributed to "senior *Times* employees," who are usually not within a mile of knowing what's actually going on. It is a mystery to me how so many of these reports, which are often untrue, can be so readily believed at the *Times*, whose newsroom is supposedly the most sophisticated and journalistically exacting in the country, and how no thought seems to be given to the quality of the source (for instance, the *New York Post*) or to the often well-known foibles and envious natures of media writers at publications that habitually stick it to the *Times*.

It was particularly annoying to read stories about me and the paper in which anonymous editors complained about "top-down management." In some cases these were people responding petulantly to an unfamiliar level of accountability. In others I detected the discomfort of editors who missed the old system in which they were allowed to turn in a daily story schedule that showed only a firm grasp of the obvious. Many media writers also developed a caricature of me that hardened through endless repetition. I was an "autocrat" whose saving grace, such as it was, came from the vague quality of being "larger than life."

For my part, I had always thought of the *Times* itself as larger than life, a place that nurtured its swashbucklers and sheltered its nerds and geeks with an indulgent tolerance. Like many newcomers, I was at first taken aback by the awkwardness, timidity, insecurity, and social envy of many *Times* people, who in my reckoning had every right to be proud of their attainments. I had admired from afar the elegant individualism of old lions such as Scotty Reston, Harrison Salisbury, Tom Wicker, Seymour Topping, Drew Middleton, Clifton Daniel, Sydney Gruson, and Punch Sulzberger himself. Once inside, I quickly adapted to the new reality that anyone likely to become a force on the paper, no matter how unpolished, was going to be smart and tough. And why bother to work for the *Times* if you didn't want to be a force in shaping its journalism? I learned to swim with sharks, and I don't mind saying that I liked it. I had long since accommodated myself to the reality that the day of *Times* men and women known for a sense of style as sharp as their intellects was past.

Most galling for me to read was that I was playing favorites in handing out assignments—when we were in fact dismantling an old-boy network of at least a century's standing. The ingrained management habit of favoring seniority and networking skills over talent had its roots in a kind of Skull and Bones system in which people who came to the *Times* at an early age and advanced to high positions made sure that the guys with whom they had been clerks and cub reporters were taken care of. The increasing numbers of *Times* people who came in mid-career had no graduating-

class loyalties, however, and I believed that over the long haul the culture of complaint could not defeat what we were trying to build—an open assignment process based purely on a correspondent's talent, performance record on big stories, and willingness to work diligently under adverse conditions.

I knew that I was taking a pounding in the press and on the office grapevine, but I also knew, from observing my predecessors, that changes of the sort we planned would inevitably encounter resistance, and therefore had to be made in the morning of an editorship, rather than in its twilight. I also realized that I had to go directly to the staff to sell my central strategic rationale: that the newspaper had to improve itself greatly from front to back in order to ensure its long-term survival. I was working my way through a series of breakfasts and lunches at which ten or twenty reporters and copy editors at a time could get an unfiltered version of my vision for the *Times* and question me in any way they liked.

I've since heard that some of them were afraid to speak up, and I wish I had been more sensitive to that. I've been involved in the combat of ideas for so long that it's hard for me to understand that people can be put off when, as the British say, one "fights one's corner hard." Moreover, even my friends and family have warned me about "the look"—an apparently warlike expression that comes over my face when I am thinking intently about something. One of my closest friends on the paper said that at such times I look like "an angry hawk." That's certainly a failing on my part, and doesn't accurately reflect the fact that I love conversation and contrary ideas, and am drawn to people with a quick sense of humor.

In any event, as we unveiled plans for year two, I knew I had the support of my publisher and I thought I had the luxury of time. For better or worse, I didn't care what *Times* people said so long as they broke stories, and in that regard virtually every reader and professional journalist I heard from agreed that the *Times* was firing on all cylinders. Was I in too much of a hurry and overly reliant on my competitive instincts? Yes. Did I pay too little attention to the oldest cliché of *Times* management—that when an executive editor sneezes, everyone else gets pneumonia? Absolutely.

AN AGENDA FOR YEAR TWO

In late 2002 and early 2003 our masthead editors and I finally had a chance to catch our breath. In memos and meetings we outlined an action plan based in large part on the critique that Arthur and I had discussed at Aquavit. We summed up our goals for 2002–2003 as a campaign to "make every section of the paper as good every day as our best sections are on our best days." We analyzed the paper front to back, asking ourselves which were our weakest and most unappealing sections. Then we set priorities based on the level of decay, the importance of each section to the paper, and our demographically driven strategy of trying to attract new readers.

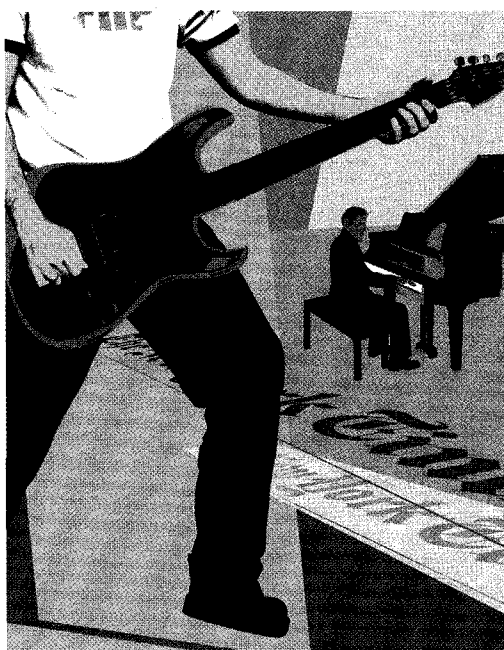
As noted, for reasons of prestige and circulation, it is impossible for the *Times* to be a truly great newspaper without a business section that's a must-read on Wall Street. Our business editor, Glenn Kramon, had been given orders by the previous administration to edit his report for the "general reader," with a heavy emphasis on mutual funds and other small-investor news. A gaping hole in that strategy is that we were essentially conceding to *The Wall Street Journal* the hottest running business story of the late-1990s boom—mergers and acquisitions. Even more disconcerting, the business section of the paper on Sunday—when we had a free-fire zone because the *Journal* and other business publications didn't appear on weekends—was being put out with bits and pieces left over from the daily business report. In other words, our weakest business reports were being reserved for those days when we had our largest readership and no competition.

Once we changed the rules of engagement under which Glenn was operating, he delivered amazing results. His section was one of the first to observe that the AOL Time Warner executive shakeup of April of 2002 marked a resurgence by Time Warner's old guard and the beginning of the end for the chairman, Steve Case. The Enron meltdown and the associated Arthur Anderson accounting scandal were the first major business stories in living memory on which the *Times* business section was either in the lead or in the hunt from the outset. Thanks to Kurt Eichenwald's sources among the Enron prosecutors and defense lawyers, his stories could not be matched. Glenn's revitalized business report was a finalist for a 2003 Pulitzer Prize in national reporting, and although I never second-guess the Pulitzer committee, I have to admit I thought we were going to win.

Nothing was more pressing than culture. When I asked Arthur Gelb, who had supervised the paper's culture section during its heyday, for an assessment of what the section needed, he was scathing. Coverage of high culture was invariably late, he said, and even the *New York Post* was beating us on the Broadway beats we had once owned. Sunday Arts & Leisure, our showcase section, had been turned over to a mid-level editor who had been licensed to ignore suggestions from anyone, including his nominal superior, the culture editor. He was a former rock critic who had undergone a highbrow conversion that left him interested only in the most arcane corners of classical music. The rest of the section was catch as catch can. The timing of its

lead profiles made embarrassingly clear week after week that the *Times* was acquiescing to the schedule demands of actors, directors, and producers with new movies, stage plays, or TV shows to plug.

When the opportunity presented itself, I moved to upgrade our culture coverage with the appointment of Steven Erlanger, an experienced foreign correspondent and former writing instructor at Harvard whom I knew to be a man of wide-ranging interest in the arts. Steve quickly stole Jodi Kantor, a young media editor from *Slate*, and put her in charge of Arts & Leisure. The impact was immediate. Both had a natural feel for topicality and demographic targeting. Steve intuitively understood the inner workings of high-culture institutions like the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera, and the New York City Ballet. Arts & Leisure readers definitely knew there was a new sheriff in town when Jodi beat New York's hip publications to the punch with a lead story on the rock group White Stripes.



Culture offered another illustration of the interconnectedness of quality journalism and financial success. The advertising department was overjoyed with the new energy of Arts & Leisure. Following *Times* protocol, its sales reps had suffered in silence while the buyers of lucrative Sunday movie ads—the movie studios whose advertising business is vital to the *Times*—complained about the blandness of the section. Contrary to widely held beliefs in the newsroom, such advertisers rarely complained about a bad review. (If

they did, they were quickly slapped down.) What really upset them was the chronically weak editorial content of Arts & Leisure, which meant their ads were not being seen by the engaged audience they wanted to reach.

(I can't resist mentioning that an exception to the no-complaint rule was Harvey Weinstein, of Miramax, whose histrionic cries of pain were endlessly amusing. He once accused me of breaking the heart of his brother Bob—not generally believed in the business to be possessed of that organ—by refusing to run a maudlin feature on their father, a failed salesman of ersatz diamonds. I directed Harvey to *Vanity Fair*, which turned the piece into an entertaining—and possibly true—shades-of-Willy Loman story.)

We learned several lessons from the changes to the back of the book. One was that the best way to revive a section was to appoint a new editor and then to give that person broad creative authority within clear guidelines as to what we needed. Another thing we learned was that many of the

people who worked for or wrote about the *Times* did not know the difference between micro-managing and macro-managing. Micro-managing would be dictating a story line to a given desk—something we did only when the desk was having trouble conceptualizing its report or coping with a major running story. Macro-managing, on the other hand, means getting involved in what, for the most part, only masthead editors and a few seasoned editors and correspondents have the time to do. That is to observe the news from 30,000 feet, as it were, and to critique the report in a way that communicates constructively to the editors and reporters down in the trenches. Most effective editors in chief have a gift for seeing the entire battlefield from above, and the radar to understand what is coming over the horizon. That is the kind of editorial leadership I promised Arthur we would create.

The Science section, the Book Review, and the Travel section were next on the priority list. All were edited by able people who had been in place too long. A couple of these editors—Chip McGrath, of the Book Review, and Cory Dean, our Science editor, who had written the definitive book on coastal erosion in the United States and was eager for reassignment as our senior environmental reporter—were gifted writers who wanted to get their bylines back into print. We had installed a new Sports editor and charged him with making us competitive with *Sports Illustrated* and *USA Today*, and with quietly searching for more-provocative columnists. The Week in Review, another franchise section that had once been a journalistic trendsetter, had over the years become decrepit in style and content. We had installed a new editor as a first step toward a major overhaul.

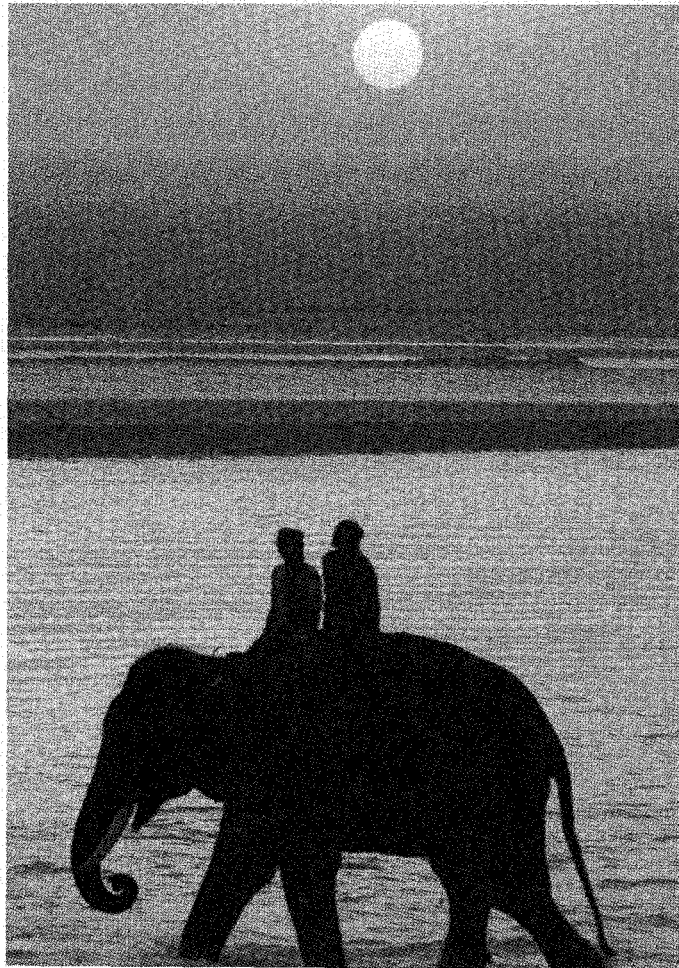
These moves would allow us to make other needed changes as part of the transition process. Given our readers' interest in books and the importance of the *Times's* best-seller list, the most urgent change involved one of the most puzzling policies I'd seen in my twenty-five years at the *Times*—the instruction to Chip McGrath not to run lead reviews on the cover of the Sunday Book Review. In that ultra-important display space we had begun running drawings and index boxes rather than formative essays by major writers, which had been the custom under earlier Book Review editors. Frankly, I wouldn't have believed the explanation for this policy if Arthur and I hadn't heard it articulated over lunch by Joe Lelyveld. According to Joe, the Book Review ought not to exert an outsize influence in the publishing world. To devote the cover to a review of a particular book every Sunday would give the impression that the *Times* was anointing it the most significant book of that week. I bit my tongue, but I believed that this cover policy succeeded in diminishing the appeal and significance of the Book Review, one of the *Times's* signature sections. Properly exerting influence is, of course, exactly what the Book Review ought to be doing.

TOO MUCH WORK, TOO LITTLE MONEY

A few months ago, when Arthur and I met for drinks, I told him that my biggest regret—outside my lack of vigilance in the Blair case—was not pushing him harder to rescind his decision to freeze our newsroom budget just north of \$180 million as the economy soured in 2002. It was an amiable chat over several martinis at a quiet Greenwich Village bar, but when I voiced my regret, Arthur responded that it wouldn't have made any difference: he would not have budged. That's too bad. One of the main things I learned when the *Times* sent me to a four-week crash course in management at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business is that you don't choke off resources to your core product when the economy is in a down cycle. I am pretty sure that Arthur was taught the same thing when he took a similar course at the Harvard Business School. Arthur viewed the editorial-budget freeze as a necessary step to keep Wall Street analysts happy, but there were other costs he could have cut—for example, by imposing across-the-board budget reductions of a few percent in each of the business and production departments. Politically, that would have helped me, because I had made a calculated decision to keep the pressure on the staff to put out a better newspaper even though Arthur was holding back on giving the newsroom the new hires it needed. I could, however, hire for attrition. One person quits—sometimes in response to stepped-up metabolism—and another can be hired. We never tried to stop a resignation or a retirement if we thought we could hire a more talented replacement. This was not a new tactic at the *Times*. Indeed, it was the traditional way for our most aggressive editors to create job openings that could not be challenged by the Guild. Inevitably, removing underperformers created newsroom grumbling. But I felt that if we could all stand being rode hard and put up wet until the end of 2003, an entire new cast of editors would be in charge at the lagging departments, and we could all begin to get some rest. This was another of those risk-reward calculations that went the wrong way when we hit the Blair flap.

As well as I know Arthur and as fond as I am of Punch, it took me a long time to figure out that they share the super-frugality one finds in families with multigenerational wealth. In putting together The New York Times Company, Punch and his charming sidekick, the late Sydney Gruson, spent too much time bottom fishing for small, cheap papers instead of ponying up to buy the larger quality papers like *The Des Moines Register*, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, and the *Baltimore Sun* when they came on the market. The acquisition of papers like those would have meant that The New York Times Company, instead of just owning the best single newspaper in the country, would have owned the nation's premier newspaper chain. As it is, it's a long drop from *The Boston Globe* to the Lakeland (Florida) *Ledger*. Missed opportunities in cable television,

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including an invitation from Ted Turner to invest in CNN, make up another heartbreaking list.

So I had to tip my hat to Arthur when he broke the family pattern of timidity on critical acquisitions and persuaded Donald Graham, the publisher of *The Washington Post*, to sell to the *Times* the *Post*'s half interest in the *International Herald Tribune*. One reason we were trying so hard to improve both the section-by-section quality of the *Times* and the work habits of our staff was to fulfill a long-range plan formulated by the management team that Arthur had assembled around him over the previous ten years. That plan envisioned the *Times* as not just a strong national newspaper but, eventually, the centerpiece of a truly global news organization. With the acquisition of the *IHT*—which could only advance that global plan—it seemed to me that Arthur was blending the stabilizing caution of his father with the ambitious reach of his grandfather. (By the way, the room on the fifteenth floor of the *Times* Building in which we met to plot the takeover of the *IHT* had in the 1930s been a secret bedchamber where Arthur Hays Sulzberger had assignations with his mistress, the Hollywood star Madeleine Carroll.)

Once the deal was done, we called an old friend, Walter Wells, a former *Times* editor who had also been managing editor of the *IHT*, out of retirement to calm the paper's Paris staff during the change of ownership that took place on January 1, 2003. We set Tom Bodkin, an assistant managing editor and design director, to work on a secret project to draw up a new page-one flag for an international edition of *The New York Times* and were planning—with what I would put at a 90 percent level of certainty—to announce its birth in November of 2003.

Those plans were shelved after my departure, although the *Times* recently announced that it is expanding the *International Herald Tribune* while keeping the *IHT* flag. The stalling of our plans to remake the *Times* into a global newspaper has been a bitter disappointment to me, as I'm sure it has been to Arthur. The delay will be sold as a matter of fiscal prudence, but it really marks a failure of nerve in regard to investing in the international English-language paper for which we felt the world was ready. The risk that the *Times* has missed its moment for becoming a transatlantic paper was underscored in February, when a group of British journalists revealed plans to raise \$29 million to launch a newspaper. It is intended to fill the market slot that should already have been occupied by an international edition of *The New York Times*.

MELTDOWN

A surprising and unpleasant side effect of the Jayson Blair scandal was that it destroyed the relationship between me and one of my mentors, Arthur Gelb. After publication of a 14,000-word, front-page story on May 11 of last year that tried to explain how Jayson's many fabrications and acts of plagiarism got into the paper, this old friend telephoned me in my office in a state of near

hysteria. He furiously denounced me for authorizing so exhaustive and revelatory an account, decrying as vast overkill our use of four full inside pages for the story, which also included a companion piece that listed and spelled out every instance of falsification our reporters had found as they tracked portions of Jayson's mendacious journey. Gelb angrily dismissed my contention that it was impossible to spend too much space setting the record straight for our readers. He quoted a high official at CBS as saying, after reading the *Times*'s lengthy story, that if *60 Minutes* had disclosed that much information about its tobacco scandal, the program would not have survived.

Like most people who've known Arthur Gelb for a long time, I was familiar with his tirades, but I had never heard him so unhinged. In retrospect I shouldn't have been surprised that he favored what the Nixon White House used to call "the modified, limited hangout route." Part of Gelb's charm is his pragmatism. He was famous for insincere praise of *Times* staff members and had made it a main tool of his management style. He prided himself on being the ultimate newsroom situationalist. In the series of *New York Times* "irregular verbs" invented by the waggish foreign correspondent David Binder, "to Gelb" meant "to cling steadfastly to ever-changing principles."

Gelb was probably right that a more modest, more circumspect correction would also have better served my personal interests. But even though I had learned some useful bureaucratic tricks from him over the years, I was guided in matters of ethics by other experiences and other role models. I had come to believe that in the case of our coverage of Wen Ho Lee, a Los Alamos scientist accused by the Clinton Administration of spying for China, neither the Editors' Note published by the news department on September 26, 2000, nor the editorial that I wrote two days later had sufficiently explained to our readers how the *Times* had erred in its reporting and commentary.

My education in journalistic ethics had been shaped by bosses who believed in total honesty with readers when it came to correcting mistakes. I had seen an editorial hero of the civil-rights era, Eugene C. Patterson, demand that news of his own DUI arrest be run on the front page of the *St. Petersburg Times*, on the grounds that its readers needed to know that the paper could be as hard on its own people as it was on others caught in embarrassing circumstances. As a newcomer to the *Times* I had seen Abe Rosenthal order an equivocating copy editor to run a correction because, as he put it, "in this business there's only one thing to do when you're wrong, and that is to get right as quickly as you can." Ben Bradlee's *Washington Post* had published an investigative account by its ombudsman after an entirely made-up central character and other fabrications by a reporter named Janet Cooke forced it to return a Pulitzer. During the Iran-contra hearings Max Frankel ordered the *Times* to run a front-page correction of a story that had misrepresented

Oliver North's testimony. Max was widely criticized for overplaying the paper's mea culpa, but I felt then, as I do now, that he set a standard of transparency every *Times* executive editor ought to follow.

At any rate, there was never any doubt in my mind about what to do after I first found out—on April 30, while on a week's vacation—that Jayson Blair had been plausibly accused of plagiarism by the *San Antonio Express-News*. The *Express* charged that he had borrowed heavily from a story it had run about a local woman whose son was killed in Iraq, lifting not only quotations but also its reporter's vivid description of the woman's living room. The following day Gerald Boyd called to say that further checking by our national editor, Jim Roberts, indicated other problems with the San Antonio story. It appeared that Jayson had never made the trip on which his reporting was based. When Jim asked Jayson why he could not produce a receipt for a hotel, Jayson said that he had slept in a car he had rented. But the car-rental agency he named had been closed at the time in question. When it became obvious that he had not been to San Antonio, we published an Editors' Note and an article on May 2 that detailed the problems with Jayson's "San Antonio" piece, suggested the possibility of deceptions in other stories, and announced his resignation from the paper. Jayson had sent word through Lena Williams, the Newspaper Guild's Unit Chair, that he would no longer talk to anyone at the *Times*, because he was upset that his integrity was being questioned. Lena was fearful that Jayson might kill himself, and Gerald assured me he had taken steps to see that Jayson was not alone after his dismissal.

Jim Roberts's research also established the likelihood of inaccuracies, plagiarism, piped quotes, and faked datelines in many other Blair stories. In my absence Gerald had formed a committee of several mid-level editors to begin investigating everything Jayson had filed in recent months and to go back earlier if necessary. The committee was to start immediately. I approved Gerald's aggressive approach to finding out the truth, but after a day's reflection I felt that the makeup of the investigative committee was not appropriate. Everyone Gerald had tapped for the committee was a person of unquestioned integrity, but most had supervised Jayson in one way or another. Overnight I decided that we were putting them in an impossible conflict-of-interest situation that might inadvertently hurt their

credibility and the credibility of the paper. On Friday, May 2, now back from vacation, I appointed a strong reporting team of seven to operate under three respected editors: Al Siegal, the assistant managing editor who was our resident expert on *Times* standards (and who later headed up the eponymous Siegal Committee that I authorized to fully investigate the Blair affair); Glenn Kramon, the business editor, who was one of our strongest supervisors on complicated projects; and Lorne Manly, the media editor responsible for stories about newspapers, including our own. I urged them to work as fast as possible, but not to sacrifice accuracy for speed. I also told Al that he should put whatever they learned in the paper according to normal editorial standards and without showing the story to Gerald or me. It was up to him to call on me if the team found something that in his judgment could not be published without the executive editor's risking an abrogation of responsibility by failing to review it.

At one point when Gerald and I were meeting with several masthead editors about the Blair problem, someone used the term "damage control." I told the group that we were not in the damage-control business. "Full disclosure" would be our approach, I said. I wouldn't change that decision today even though the story as published started the unraveling that cost Gerald and me our jobs.

I made the decision for full disclosure shortly after having read, earlier that day, the entire personnel file on Jayson Blair, who had been hired as an intern in 1998 and then promoted to the full-time staff early in 2001, before I became executive editor. There, for the first time, I learned that Jayson had a history of being warned by supervising editors about mistakes that required printed corrections. Oddly, Jayson's rate of corrections over five years averaged out within the normal range. I learned during the course of my inquiry that editors overseeing new employees become alarmed when five percent of a reporter's stories provoke corrections. This sounds like a high number, but it should be remembered that corrections are often the result of production or editing errors that have little to do with the substantive reporting of a story. In fact, some of our most respected veteran reporters actually had higher correction rates. It was in that reading of the file on May 2 that I first saw a memo (dated April 1, 2002) from Jon Landman warning, "We have to stop Jayson from writing for *The Times*. Right now." For a warning of such gravity, it had had limited circulation, never reaching me or anyone else on the



masthead. It was addressed to William Schmidt, our associate managing editor for personnel, with a copy to Nancy Sharkey, one of his assistants, who had been involved with monitoring Jayson's performance since his internship. Bill Schmidt later told me in Gerald's presence that he was sure he had reported to Gerald orally when he got Jon's warning. Gerald did not dispute that statement. If that warning took place, it is to my direct knowledge the only time that anyone at masthead level was told about Jayson's accuracy problems. (Ultimately, the Siegal Committee reported that Gerald had been copied on an earlier Landman warning memo, sent in February of 2002.) Because I did not want to inhibit our reporting team's inquiry, I never asked Jon Landman why he didn't copy his memo to me or other masthead editors. Later he was quoted as saying that he believed that his views on Jayson were well known, since he had opposed my predecessor's decision to include Jayson among the interns promoted to staff reporting jobs in 2001. I have no reason to question Jon's account, but I do feel that had I been in the bureaucratic loop on the memo, the Jayson Blair story would have ended there.

One of my close friends on the paper, Mike Oreskes, an assistant managing editor, said a couple of weeks into the Jayson Blair crisis that I was an odd kind of manager—"a control freak who doesn't like details."

That said, I have repeatedly taken full responsibility for the failure to catch Jayson Blair. I had been in the job for twenty months, and I should have somehow found the time to ascertain whether our ramshackle personnel system was up to the task. It is a fact but not an excuse that I had been focusing my attention instead on the news, on our strategic plan, and on finding and installing new department heads. No one forced me to assume, wrongly, that matters of signal import would be brought to me as a matter of standard operating procedure. In fact, there was no standard operating procedure, and that, too, became my responsibility on the day I took over.

Furthermore, if as a matter of daily routine I had been reading and reacting to the newspaper's published corrections as closely and quickly as I should have, I would have noticed Jayson's pattern of playing fast and loose with the facts and made inquiries that would probably have compelled me to start paying attention to a potentially serious problem. One of my close friends on the paper, Mike Oreskes, an assistant managing editor, said a couple of

weeks into the crisis that I was an odd kind of manager—"a control freak who doesn't like details."

During a tumultuous meeting of the entire *Times* staff, which was held at the Loew's Astor Plaza Theater, in Times Square, on May 14, three days after our front-page reconstruction of the Blair affair, I told the assembled reporters and editors that race had probably played a role in my approving the suggestion (by Gerald Boyd and Jim Roberts) that Jayson be added to the team covering the Washington, D.C., sniper story. The fact that Jayson was black and had been hired under a program designed in part to bring more young minority reporters into the paper had created a racial climate unlike any I had ever seen at the *Times*. Minority staffers feared a white backlash against affirmative-action hiring designed to increase the modest presence of blacks, Latinos, and Asians on our staff. Many whites in the newsroom were openly denouncing a purported "double standard" in our personnel practices. I tried to put into context my own background. "Where I come from, when it comes to principles on race, you have to pick a ditch to die in. And let it come rough or smooth, you'll find me in the trenches for justice. Does that mean I personally favored Jayson? Not consciously. But you have a right to ask if I, as a white man from Alabama with those convictions, gave him one chance too many by not stopping his appointment to the sniper team. When I look into my own heart for the truth of that, the answer is yes."

But many news accounts have failed to make an important explanatory point. Whatever slack I was cutting Jayson had nothing to do with his accuracy problems. I thought I was giving this apparently talented and engaging young man a second chance based on a different problem that had been brought to my attention around the end of 2002. That was when Gerald had informed me that Jayson had told him that he had gone to the *Times's* Employee Assistance Program and requested treatment for alcohol and drug abuse. Under a long-standing *Times* policy, the EAP itself cannot reveal the nature of an employee's problems, whether physical, psychological, or chemical in origin. Managers are simply informed that the employee is on leave, and when the EAP returns that employee to work, the presumption is that he or she is fit for duty.

As a manager in Washington and New York, I had dealt with the cases of two brilliant writers who went on leave for treatment of alcoholism. In both cases the writers had done Pulitzer-level work after their treatment. I believed strongly that people should not be penalized for seeking help from the EAP. Since that department was forbidden to give managers detailed information, I was relying on my experience with the previous two cases when Jayson Blair returned to work. I had learned something about how to spot the warning signs of relapse and also about those signs of energy, productivity, and sociability that indicated a recovery was in progress. I passed Jayson's desk often after his return, and

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I saw in him a level of vitality and social engagement that I took to be evidence of recovery. These positive signs, I thought, warranted giving him a spot on the team covering the D.C. sniper story.

Nowadays I think of Jayson Blair as an accident that ended my newspaper career in the same unpredictable way that a heart attack or a plane crash might have. After months of consideration, the one thing I wish I had done differently pertains to how we produced the editorial team's exhaustive report to our readers on Jayson's misdeeds. My initial impulse had been to call a distinguished former staff member out of retirement to write an independent report. I approached one such individual, who could not do it for personal reasons and whose privacy I respect. I wish I had then asked Max

Frankel, Bill Kovach, or John Lee, a former assistant managing editor, to return to the *Times* temporarily to conduct the inquiry and write the report. Such a person would have had a depth of managerial experience and institutional knowledge that was understandably missing from our team of seven mid-career reporters.

On the Sunday morning that their story appeared, I met John McPhee, the *New Yorker* writer, for a shad-fishing trip on the upper Delaware River. It was a foggy day. The steep riverbanks were painted in the first pale greens of spring. As we floated along in a McKenzie River drift boat, bald eagles flushed from the shoreline timber and flapped away downstream. I read the story in sections as the day unfolded, and I knew at that point that I was unlikely to survive. The

THE VISIONARY UNDER THE KNIFE

Helpless as an overturned beetle—left eye prepped
and draped—I lie on the operating
table. On this final day of the year, the surgeon
will remove the identical twin preachers in the one
pulpit by the papal flag and the distant
fire hydrant down the block
that looks like a vicious green dog. The crew

waits for the Nurse with the Knives. Of course
I wear an IV in my arm, tape across
my brow and ankles, terror in my solar plexus.
Team members talk to one another
in low Medicalese: *capsulorrhexis ... paracentesis*
tract ... phacoemulsification. The oximeter
clipped to my middle finger

must be keeping time
with my pulse. Something else: a speculum locks my
eyelids open. If I could clearly see
what everyone else is doing, I would not be
here. Masked faces draw closer. These costumes
suggest a royal ball, a bank heist, a Halloween
party. I dramatize

all three. The glass eye of
the operating microscope zooms in
on the surgical field. Dr. Chen makes a stab
incision at the 5 o'clock
position, perhaps to revise ad slogans, mangled
by weak eyes, on my small TV.
Anesthetic drops allow the doctor to dissolve

the lens in quarters. That's when I issue orders:

Leave the eyelid movies untouched!

They are my favorite show to watch as I'm
drifting into dream. The room fills with jets of
spraying water and ultrasound far beyond
the human ear as the hollow needle vibrates 40,000
times a second. The needle stops. The doctor

inserts a foldable silicone lens, courtesy of
Bausch & Lomb. The surgeon
checks the wound for leaks. More anesthetic drops.
Tomorrow is a New Year. Circus colors of falling
stars. Dazzle of meteors from oncoming
cars fades to Seattle gray. Metal patch over gauze
dressing attached

to my operated eye. My trusty
gurney, on standby, carries me to Recovery,
body propped high enough to sip my java
and order tardy breakfast.
Time to leave but not the way I came. Doors
swing open on the ever-moving world
always and never the same.

—MADELINE DEFREES

Madeline DeFrees is the author of several books of poems, including Blue Dusk, which received the 2002 Lenore Marshall Prize from the Academy of American Poets. She lives in Seattle.

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article did not pursue the one area of reporting that might have worked in my favor—how and why critical information about Jayson never reached me.

After the story ran, I talked to each of the seven reporters one on one and asked them to tell me anything I might find helpful. One told me, prophetically, that I had “lost the newsroom” and would have a hard time getting it back. But the political wounds inflicted by the fallout from the Blair story were not the most surprising development for me.

The biggest surprise was Arthur Sulzberger. I had not realized how rattled he was, and frankly I don’t think I worked hard enough to stiffen his spine for the survival battle we could have won. His statement to me at the outset that he was going to be “heavily involved” in planning our public-relations strategy should have been a tip-off. I had long noticed in business situations that when Arthur was worried, he tended to yell Hi-ho, Silver! and gallop into the middle of things, and also to form committees. In this case he formed an emergency committee that met almost daily and settled on an approach of “not feeding the story” with interviews on television and in other publications. It may not have been the best strategy, but its only chance of working was for us to be disciplined and patient in hunkering down and taking a beating.

Arthur Gelb, in the midst of one of his denunciations of my full-disclosure policy, said that the publisher got turned because “the cousins”—a group of Sulzberger family future stockholders, some of whom supposedly harbored doubts about or envy toward Arthur—were becoming restive. Gelb said they couldn’t abide hearing Jay Leno and David Letterman telling jokes about the *Times*, and were worried about the dinner-party chatter they were hearing in Manhattan. But I think Arthur Sulzberger’s response was more intuitively personal than that. My dismissal came a day after he went to Washington for an ill-timed brown-bag lunch at the Washington bureau. When I asked him how it had gone, he said, “Brutal” without elaborating. My guess is that it revived traumatic memories of his having once let himself get “beaten up,” as he put it to me, at one of our editorial retreats back in 1992. At that time Arthur had opened the floor to criticism of Max Frankel, who was accused of being insensitive to and intellectually dismissive of his staff. But when Arthur sided with Max’s critics, the assembled editors suddenly rounded on him and lectured him on his responsibilities as a fledgling publisher. In any event, had I known we weren’t going to stay the course, I would not have recommended to Arthur that we hold the big meeting on May 14 to let the staff vent about the story we had published the previous Sunday.

On the morning of that meeting Arthur asked me how I felt. “Calm,” I said. “Completely calm.” He looked at me with genuine alarm.

Later, hoping to reassure him, I said that I had been thinking about his question, and I had a more complete answer. We were walking toward the theater at that point.

“I feel interested,” I said, adding that this was one of the most fascinating experiences I’d ever had.

I don’t think that helped him. *The New York Times* is an environment that causes fear to fester in people, but I had long before given up my fear about anything that might happen to me inside the *Times*. I had also accepted that, for better or worse, the primal code of honor that had been drilled into me in childhood and by my early heroes and mentors in journalism might one day lead to a situation in which I’d be fired by one newspaper or another. I’m sorry it had to be the best one I ever worked for. In hindsight I’m a little surprised that I weathered more than eight years as editorial-page editor without being canned. Arthur had been a rock during those years, turning aside complaints from President Bill Clinton and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani on down. In the Blair case Arthur had a decision to make, and I accept that he made it according to his best judgment. Still, it pains me to think that I didn’t do enough to buck him up.

Whatever his strengths and weaknesses, Arthur is his own man, and a different man from his father. Punch in his prime would never have thrown over one of his executive editors under the pressure of employees who didn’t like the editor personally or who disagreed with a legitimate strategy for reinvigorating the *Times*’s journalism. The difference between Punch and Arthur is the difference between the Marine Corps, where Punch had his formative experience, and Outward Bound, where Arthur had his. Both systems are about getting to the top of the mountain, and both father and son want to get there, and both know that the *Times*’s staff sometimes has to be kicked and pulled on a hard climb. But Arthur wants it to be touchy-feely along the way. I knew that going in, and I didn’t bother to check his emotional temperature often enough.

The May 14th meeting with the *Times* staff was a disaster. It provided a forum for the culture of complaint, just as Bill Safire had predicted it would. Always stalwart in a crisis, Bill had urged me not to have the meeting. He said that the worst of the pounding was over, and that such a meeting would only give dedicated enemies of our overall strategy a chance to replay a game that they were losing. I told Bill that Arthur and I had decided independently that we had to do it, and that at any rate the die was cast and could not be called back to hand. What I needed now, I told him in a playful tone, was some of that high-priced survival advice he used to give Nixon. I already gave you that, he said with a laugh, but you’re going to have the meeting anyway.

A GOOD DAY TO DIE

I never asked Arthur about the thought process that led to his dismissing me, or about what the decisive moments or influences were. The relationship between a publisher and his top editor is like a marriage. Once the essential bond is broken on one side or the other, the marriage is over. Anything else is just details.

When we met on the afternoon of June 4, he was more emotional than I. Once again we were in Arthur Hays Sulzberger's old trysting place. "You've given your life to this paper," Arthur said. He reached out and grasped my arm, and seemed almost overcome for a moment. I knew him well enough to see that his agony was genuine but his mind was made up. The language was all familiar *Times*-speak, some of it debatable, much of it true. Arthur believed that if I stayed there would be "too much blood on the floor." As we both knew, he had decided weeks earlier that we needed to placate large segments of the staff by promising to ease up on "more, better, faster." In that regard, he said, the *Times* was asking me to do something I was not cut out for. "You're an activist," he said. I certainly wasn't going to argue with that, although I would have put it differently: If you're a fast-ball pitcher, you have to throw heat in the big games. If you can't win with your strength, you're not destined to win.

The previous couple of weeks had been costly for me in a way I had not anticipated. I had begun to feel disdain for some people I had held in great affection for many years. I'm sure that will pass in time. I intend for it to. At sixty-one, I'm young enough to invent an entirely new chapter in my life rather than perpetually re-reading the old ones. I do not miss the daily grind of newspapering or the ephemeral nature of newspaper writing. Since I was twelve or so, my strongest interest has been in literature, and I'll be turning in that direction during the extra years I've secured by getting fired. I had twenty-five great years at the *Times*—and one bad month. And in the relatively short time available to me as executive editor I got to show the one thing I had always wanted to show—that a paper that was being driven like an elderly Buick had the horsepower to run at Grand Prix speed.

I find myself thinking often of Arthur's remark that a century and a half is an advanced age for a business. Yet most people at the *Times*, like many of its readers, unthinkingly regard it as a permanent fixture of American life. Nothing, however, guarantees its future. Corporations are transient. The East India Company, a global power in the eighteenth century, exists today only in the history books. The *Times*'s only guarantee of its future lies in expanding its commercial and journalistic reach. I am today and will remain a hard-liner on the notion that the paper must grow in quality and in size, and that if it is to do so, those

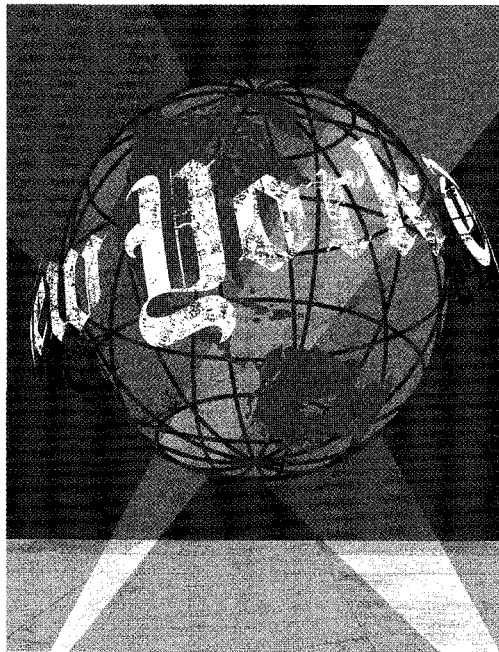
who believe in the culture of achievement and in putting the readers first must prevail.

At the moment, the signs are mixed. Plans to revamp the back of the book are moving forward on some fronts. This piecemeal effort needs to become holistic. On the business side, the construction of a new *Times* office tower, on Eighth Avenue and Forty-first Street, has been delayed as its developer seeks financing. If and when it's built, the space for the broadcast and digital activities central to the *Times*'s future will be inadequate. On the journalistic side, Arthur and the newsroom have allocated additional resources to the *International Herald Tribune*, but plans to re-flag the *IHT* as an *International New York Times* seem to be on indefinite hold. There's even grouching by some in the newsroom that buying the *IHT* was a mistake and that Arthur overpaid for it. Neither is true. But buying it and not revamping it right away would emphatically be a mistake.

The Siegal Committee, whose members were selected by its chairman, released its report on July 30, 2003. The report shows an institution in denial. The committee had broadened its inquiry beyond Jayson Blair to include questions of newsroom management and communication, but its conclusions were a hymn to the old status quo, drafted by the very people who most strongly resisted the idea of a more vigorous and inclusive way of producing the paper. The three outside members who wrote the section dealing with Jayson Blair's perfidious passage through the *Times* dodged

the question of why information about his errors was not widely shared and also failed to come to grips with troubled race relations in the newsroom in the wake of Jayson's betrayal of the paper and the departure of Gerald Boyd as managing editor. The entire report reflected the persistence of a trait that Turner Catledge and most of us who followed him tried to overcome: the newsroom's automatic resistance to change.

I go back in memory to a moment in the game of historical quotation that Arthur and I often played. He was big on Churchill, Ike, and John Wayne. I tended toward Civil War generals, Bear Bryant, and the fatalistic and unfailingly liberating battle cry of the Cheyenne dog soldiers—"It is a good day to die." As our dinner at Aquavit was ending, I summed up by telling Arthur that I believed, as William Tecumseh Sherman wrote in his memoirs, that the place from which to lead was *tête d'armée*. Arthur observed that the head of the army was also a good place to get shot. ▀

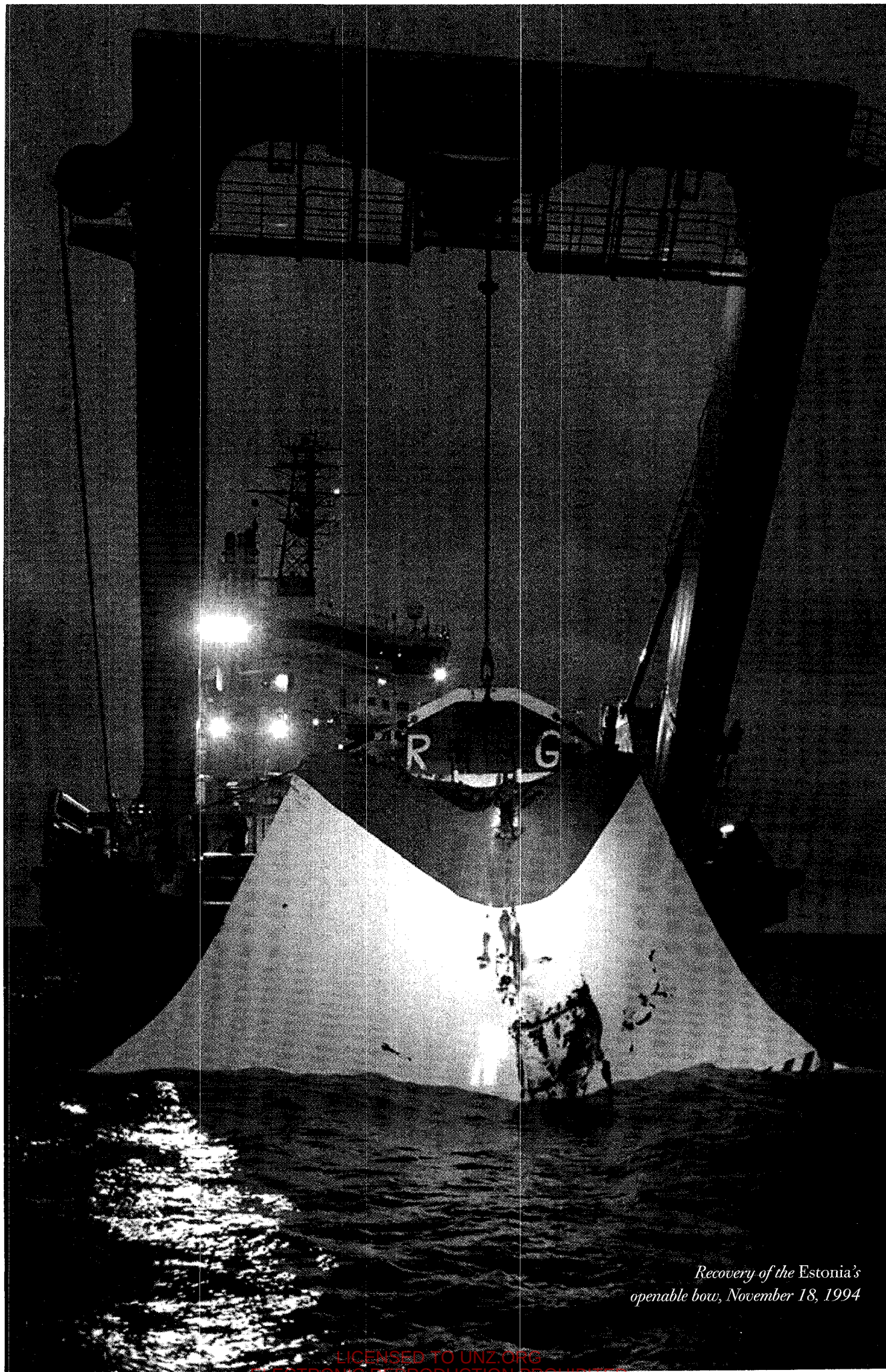






There are minivans, then there's the Odyssey.





*Recovery of the Estonia's
openable bow, November 18, 1994*

A SEA STORY

One of the worst maritime disasters in European history took place a decade ago. It remains very much in the public eye. On a stormy night on the Baltic Sea, more than 850 people lost their lives when a luxurious ferry sank below the waves. From a mass of material, including official and unofficial reports and survivor testimony, our correspondent has distilled an account of the Estonia's last moments—part of his continuing coverage for the magazine of anarchy on the high seas

BY WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE

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After midnight, in the first hours of September 28, 1994, the ferry *Estonia* foundered in the waves of a Baltic storm. The ship was the pride of the newly independent Estonian nation, recently arisen from the Soviet ruins. It was a massive steel vessel, 510 feet long and nine decks high, with accommodations for up to 2,000 people. It had labyrinths of cabins, a swimming pool and sauna, a duty-free shop, a cinema, a casino, a video arcade, a conference center, three restaurants, and three bars. It also had a car deck that stretched from bow to stern through the hull's insides. In port the car deck was accessed through a special openable bow that could be raised to allow vehicles to drive in and out. At sea that bow was supposed to remain closed and locked. In this case, however, it did not—and indeed it caused the ship to capsize and sink when it came open in the storm and then fell entirely off.

On the night of its demise the *Estonia* had 989 people aboard. It departed from its home port, Tallinn, at around 7:15 P.M., and proceeded on its regular run, 258 miles and fifteen hours west across open waters to the Swedish archipelago and Stockholm. For the first several hours, as dusk turned to night, it moved through sheltered coastal waters. Passengers hardly enough to withstand the wind and cold on deck would have seen gray forested islands creeping by to the north, and to the south the long industrial shoreline of Estonia giving way to a low coast darkening until it faded into the night. Gentle swells rolled in from the west, indicating the sea's unease—with significance probably only to the crew, which had received storm warnings for the open water ahead but had not spread the news. There were various forecasts, and they tended to agree: an intense low-pressure system near Oslo was moving quickly to the east, and was expected to drag rain and strong winds across the route, stirring up waves occasionally as high as twenty feet. Such conditions were rare for the area, occurring only a few times every fall and

winter, but for ferries of this size they were not considered to be severe. Surviving crew members later claimed that a special effort had been made on the car deck to lash the trucks down securely—exemplary behavior that, if it occurred, probably had more to do with concern about vehicle-damage claims than about the safety of the ship. No other preparations were made. The main worry was to arrive in Stockholm on time.

That night the ship knifed ahead at its full 19 knots, with all four main engines fully throttled up to their combined output of 23,500 horsepower, driving the hull across the gently accumulating seas. The vessel's motion was at first barely noticeable to the passengers. Inside the *Estonia*, the public spaces had the look of a coastal casino designed around a nautical theme—completely serviceable but over-decorated in red, a bit worn, a bit out of date. Though many couples and a few groups were aboard, collectively it was a ship full of strangers, with little time to make new friends or, as people do on longer passages, to fall even temporarily in love. The experience of the sinking therefore turned out to be lonely and highly atomized. Observers who later claimed that a social breakdown had occurred failed to take that into account. Still, at first that night there was something of a cruise-ship atmosphere on the *Estonia*, as passengers dropped off their bags in their cramped, Pullman-style cabins and emerged to explore the possibilities for whiling away the hours. Their choices ranged from visiting the sauna and pool on Deck 0, deep below the waterline, to stopping by the various bars, entertainment spots, and

restaurants on Decks 4, 5, and 6. Deck 7 contained the crew cabins, but it had an outside promenade for passengers who wanted to feel the wind and watch the ocean surge by. An external staircase led to additional outside space on Deck 8, from which the lifeboats hung on davits. Because of the wind and the cold, only a handful of passengers ventured outside. Turned inward

William Langewiesche is a national correspondent for The Atlantic. His articles on shipping and the ocean for the magazine have been collected in The Outlaw Sea, to be released this month by North Point Press, a division of Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

REUTERS

from the sea, the others lingered over their drinks and meals and, as the evening drew on, talked, read, gambled, or watched dancing girls and listened to Estonian rock in the big Baltic Bar, on Deck 6.

By 10:00 P.M. the *Estonia* had passed north of a lighthouse called Osmussaar and was moving through the open ocean in deteriorating weather, with rain, strong winds, and an overcast scudding low and fast across steep seas. The ship was still running at full power, but it was slowed now to 17 knots by the impacts of the waves, which rose regularly to ten feet and higher. Sheets of salt water were torn loose by the plunging and driving of the bow. They swept as heavy spray across the foredeck, and rained against the window-lined superstructure, as high as the upper decks and the navigation bridge. Though the motions of the hull were complex, the ride was rough mostly just in pitch and not in roll, because the waves, unlike the winds, came from nearly straight ahead. The ship heaved upward and vibrated in the heaviest water, and slammed down into the troughs, sometimes with a crash. The motions were difficult to predict even for the crew. Some passengers grew seasick, and retired to their cabins to suffer in private. This was not the best tactic, since most of the cabins were located forward in the ship, where the motion was most violent. For anyone feeling sick, just getting to them would have been a trial. The interior hallways of the accommodation sections were windowless, fluorescent-lit passageways, smelling of aluminum and plastic, and barely wide enough for two people to pass. They ran fore and aft, and had branches from side to side. With their twenty-four-hour lighting and long rows of anonymous, closely spaced cabin doors, they gave those parts of the ship an institutional allure not much different from that of modern prison galleries. Moreover, the cabins themselves were smaller than cells, and though this must have been unimaginable to even the most miserable of their occupants that night, many soon turned into traps and then coffins.

By around 11:00 P.M. the restaurants had closed. In the Baltic Bar a Swedish passenger named Pierre Thiger lingered over a single Irish coffee, enjoying the show. Thiger was a Stockholm-based ship broker, age thirty-two, who had gone to Estonia to look over a small freighter, and was traveling home alone. He had taken the *Estonia* several times before, but never in weather so rough. As something of a mariner himself, he believed that the ship was being driven too hard, but he was not particularly worried. Earlier in the evening he had run across an acquaintance in the crowd, and the two men had dined together before proceeding to the bar; now they listened to the band.

As the weather grew worse and the ship began to roll more heavily, the waiters had trouble moving among the chairs with their trays, and a speaker on wheels began to move back and forth dangerously on the stage; at one point a dancing girl

fell into the band. The show was called off at 12:30. Thiger and his acquaintance headed down one deck to the Pub Admiral, where festivities were still going strong. The Pub Admiral was a long, narrow room aft of midship on the starboard side. There were perhaps fifty people there. It was karaoke time. The crowd was loud and drunk. The sound system was turned too high. Thiger and his acquaintance sat at the back of the pub at first, but then moved forward for a better view, and perched on two high stools near the stage. Neither man ordered a drink. Thiger liked to sing, and he joined the pub's paid entertainer on the stage for a song; then he took his seat again. Several other passengers went to the stage to sing. At the entertainer's urging, the crowd sang too. Just before 1:00, when the show was scheduled to end, the entertainer, as Thiger later remembered, said, "We have such an amusing time tonight, so I think I should extend the time a little."

It was soon afterward that Thiger heard a heavy, metallic-sounding blow that reverberated sharply through the ship's structure. At first he thought it must have been caused by a heavy wave, but it didn't quite feel like ordinary "slamming." He wondered if a truck might have overturned on the car deck—but no, the impact was too strong for that; it was almost as if a whiplash had run through the bulkheads. Thiger did not express these thoughts, and his acquaintance said nothing either. A murmur may have rippled through the crowd, but the noise level was too high to tell for sure; the mood remained determinedly festive. Thiger heard a clear comment from only one passenger, a man nearby, who joked, "Ha! Now we have sailed against an iceberg!" and took another gulp of beer. The singing continued unabated.

About half a minute later there was another impact, identical to the first. Thiger got the distinct impression that the ship was swerving. He said to his acquaintance, "Do you feel it? We are swinging longitudinally now." His acquaintance said, "Yes, we are." Thiger felt a little unsettled, and reassured himself with the thought that the ship must have turned directly into the waves, perhaps to lessen the rolls while the crew lashed vehicles or cargo more securely to the decks. Suddenly, however, the ship shook with a strange back-and-forth movement and began to wallow. It rolled to port and starboard a few times, and then rolled steeply to starboard and came back a little, but never returned to level. The initial list was enough to cause glasses to come crashing off a shelf, and a speaker to rumble across the floor and collide with a railing.

The singing stopped.

Thiger felt butterflies in his stomach. To his acquaintance he said, "Now there is something completely wrong. Now let's get out of here."

"Yes, as you say," his acquaintance said.

The two men jumped up, and had taken only a few steps toward the exit when the heel increased to an angle that Thiger estimated to be about 30 degrees. There was immediate panic in the pub, with much shouting. The bar counter

stood along a wall on the pub's port side. The bartender had braced herself behind it, but she collapsed screaming under a deluge of bottles and glasses. Refrigerators came loose, and stools slipped out from under the patrons who clung to the countertop to keep from falling. Others slid across the floor in a confusion of tumbling tables, chairs, and sound equipment, and they piled up in tangles along the ship's starboard side, across and downslope from the exit. The bar counter itself broke loose. Many people were injured and subsequently died. Pierre Thiger and his acquaintance managed somehow not to fall. But movement across the pub's open spaces toward the exit was now extremely difficult, even for men who were both agile and sober.

At the receiving side of the Pub Admiral's deadly collapse, along the starboard wall, sat another Swede of about the same age, a recreational diver named Rolf Sörman, who turned out to have prodigious reserves of calm, and great presence of mind. He was a member of a small "human resources" group that was making a round trip from Stockholm in order to hold a shipboard seminar in the *Estonia's* aft conference room—an alternative to holding the seminar in a hotel, and a common practice on Baltic ferries. As a young man Sörman had toyed with the idea of going to sea, and in-

treated from the noise to the farthest reaches of the pub, which happened to be across from the exit, along the ship's starboard wall. During that short walk Sörman felt two or three distinct shocks on the deck under his feet. These appear not to have been the heavy blows felt by Thiger and others, because there was time afterward for leisurely conversation. The women sat on a sofa that was bolted to the floor. Sörman sat facing them on a chair. There were windows in the wall, black with the ocean night. Five minutes before 1:00 A.M. one of the women excused herself over Sörman's affable objections. She left the pub, walked forward past the information desk and up the main staircase, and went directly to her cabin, on Deck 6. When, shortly thereafter, the ship heeled over, her door popped open and she fell backward in her cabin and was pinned by gravity against the far wall. Because she was determined and nimble, however, she managed to emerge from the trap, to negotiate the tilting hallway, to climb to Deck 7 and the outside promenade, and ultimately to survive.

Rolf Sörman and his three remaining companions moved even faster. As the Pub Admiral collapsed into chaos and screams, they jumped onto the sofa to avoid the sliding debris. A wave lapped against the windows beside them and then cov-

Survival that night was a very tight race, and savagely simple. People who started early and moved fast had some chance of winning. People who started late or hesitated for any reason had no chance at all.

deed had spent some weeks as an officer in training on a Swedish ferry before deciding that law school would provide a better life. Like Thiger, he had disapproved of the speed with which the *Estonia* was being driven into the waves, and he had contrasted this handling, as he later said to me, with the policies he remembered from his Swedish ferry service, during which ships had been slowed early for passenger comfort in the expectation that people would maintain their spending in the restaurants and bars. The Estonians were evidently not yet appreciative of such capitalistic subtleties. Earlier in the evening Sörman had watched as the officers pushed their ship past another ferry in a typically brutish Soviet manner. At dinner many of the people in his seminar group were sick. They consumed a pre-ordered three-course meal nonetheless, and three bottles of wine for twelve. Afterward they broke up for the night, but Sörman and four female colleagues headed up to the windward promenade on Deck 7, portside, to look at the sea. When they got there, the doors to the outside were swinging open and shut, apparently because a latch had broken, and the carpet leading from the stairwell was soaked with saltwater spray. Three of the four women grew nervous about going outside.

Eventually they all found shelter in the Pub Admiral. They ordered beers, and for a while sat too close to the speakers to be able to talk. Well before 1:00 A.M. they re-

tered the glass with solid green water lit by the light of the ship's interior. When the ship rocked back from the steepest angle, Sörman and his group seized the opportunity to gain the exit doorway nearby. They waited there briefly for another cycle, and then lunged across an open space and dashed through a lateral corridor toward the aft stairway, which was just beyond the center line of the ship on the port side. During that dash a falling refrigerator nearly hit Sörman, and smashed into a wall. A man emerged from a forward corridor, shouting, "Don't panic! The crew has everything under control!"

They did not panic. On the other hand, they believed that the ship was out of control. They came to the aft stairway. Using the railings and brass banisters, they hauled themselves rapidly up two levels, encountering only a few other passengers along the way. At around this time there was a weak announcement in Estonian: "*Häire! Häire! Laeval on häire!*" meaning "Alarm! Alarm! There is an alarm on the ship!" Sörman and his companions did not hear the announcement. At the top of the stairway, on Deck 7, they found that some of the crew had formed a human chain to help people up the sloping floor to the promenade doors. Then the ship heeled more steeply, however, and the crew disappeared onto the open deck outside. Sörman and his group made it to the doorway nonetheless, and by grasping the frame they pulled themselves through. They were among the first passengers to

reach the promenade. After failing to open one of the life-vest boxes, they succeeded in opening another. Still functioning as a group at that time, they helped one another to find life vests with no missing straps, and to put the vests on.

Pierre Thiger and his acquaintance were slower to escape from the Pub Admiral, though not for want of trying. The brief opportunities provided by the rolling motion—the cyclical moderations of the starboard heel that Rolf Sörman had exploited—were spoiled for them by the distance to the exit and the presence of other passengers ahead who were either too shocked or too drunk to move quickly or get out of the way. Afterward the floor angles grew so steep that even crawling was ineffective. Here again, though, people formed human chains. Thiger and his acquaintance were able to reach the hallway outside. With the further use of human chains they struggled across the ship amid scenes of bedlam and fear, and they arrived at the aft stairway. By then the stairway was crowded with fleeing passengers, many of whom were hanging on to the railings as if paralyzed. Thiger and his acquaintance tore loose their hands and shouted in their ears to get them moving, and after an agonizingly slow climb they finally arrived on Deck 7, somehow negotiated the steepening floor, and moved through the double doors to temporary safety outside. They were among the last to make it there. Since the first catastrophic heel maybe eight minutes had gone by. The list had increased by now to 40 degrees. When it got to 45 degrees, two or three minutes later, escape from the ship's interior became all but impossible.

Survival that night was a very tight race, and savagely simple. People who started early and moved fast had some chance of winning. People who started late or hesitated for any reason had no chance at all. Action paid. Contemplation did not. The mere act of getting dressed was enough to condemn people to death, and although many of those who escaped to the water succumbed to the cold, most of the ultimate winners endured the ordeal completely naked or in their underwear. The survivors all seem to have grasped the nature of this race, the first stage of which involved getting outside to the Deck 7 promenade without delay. There was no God to turn to for mercy. There was no government to provide order. Civilization was ancient history, Europe a faint and faraway place. Inside the ship, as the heel increased, even the most primitive social organization, the human chain, crumbled apart. Love only slowed people down. A pitiless clock was running. The ocean was completely in control.

Oddly enough, the relative distance that people had to travel seems to have made little difference. In the crew cabins on Deck 7, whose windows gave directly onto the portside promenade, divers later spotted the bodies of twelve victims who had gone down with the ship. Conversely, the people with the longest escape route fared surprisingly well. These were the occupants of the ship's claustrophobic basement—the cramped economy section that filled the forward half of

Deck 1, below the car deck and the waterline. Because of their proximity to the bow, they turned out to have had a double advantage: an uncomfortable ride that kept many of them awake, and an early warning in the form of strange watery noises and metallic crashes, which for as much as half an hour before the list aroused their curiosity and concern. This combination helps explain why the hands-down winner of the entire race came from Deck 1. She was a Swedish woman, age thirty, who expressed concern to her companions, and climbed the stairs fully clothed to Deck 7, where she arrived presumably quite calmly and took a seat at least fifteen minutes in advance of the rush. Others on Deck 1 who were less alert to the danger were nonetheless well primed, and those who ultimately survived sprang into action immediately when the ship heeled over with a screech and a howl and an impact so violent that people were thrown out of bed, or against the walls. Up and down the hallways doors popped open and people emerged. As the leaders fled, they saw water in various forms: running in rivulets on the floor, or rushing as a river, or spurting from fittings on a wall, or cascading down from overhead. Their escape routes led by six short stairways to a common passageway inside the car deck's center casing, from which separate stairways then led upward, primarily to the *Estonia's* large entrance foyer, which spanned the ship at the base of its main staircase, on Deck 4. The center casing was still mostly dry, but floodwaters sprayed at the fleeing passengers through gaps around the car-deck access doors.

Those left behind had a hard time. From what little is known about conditions on Deck 1, panic broke out as soon as the windowless world began to turn onto its side. The shouting was very loud. People were trapped in their cabins, either too weak or too badly injured to overcome the increasing list. In one doorway a tough old woman hung on determinedly, trying to pull herself out. People ran back and forth in the main hallway, colliding with one another in apparent confusion about where to go. Movement soon became difficult. As the angle increased, many who had found their way to the stairs realized that they lacked the arm strength to keep climbing. One woman dressed in a nightgown stood at the base of the stairs screaming hysterically. Others who had stalled partway up seemed passive and resigned. They were overtaken by people who could not help them, and who, although still capable of movement, were themselves losing the race to escape.

"Häire! Häire! Laeval on häire!"

On the upper passenger decks—4, 5, and 6—in the extensive accommodation sections, the hallway scenes were just as rough. People who had emerged from their cabins were trying to escape along the fore-aft corridors, which at the regulation width of 3.9 feet were tight even under upright conditions, and became extraordinarily difficult to negotiate now as they began to rotate onto their sides, shrinking vertically and forcing people who were starting to walk on the walls to



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crouch as they attempted to proceed. Some crew members were seen trying at enormous personal sacrifice to help them along. But all was confusion, congestion, and noise—raw terror contained in those fluorescent-lit prison galleries. The starboard cabin doorways now became chasms that had to be jumped across. Passengers who failed fell into the cabins, and some did not emerge. The transverse corridors became dangerous shafts, dropping away to the starboard side. Though no witnesses of this survived, after seawater began to enter through breaking windows, those shafts became deadly wells. A particularly vicious trap was an apparent escape route provided by a small stairway at the forward end of the superstructure, which led upward through the stacked accommodation sections from Deck 4 all the way to Deck 7 on the ship's high port side. It could be reached on each deck only by crossing the forwardmost of the transverse corridors, but before the list grew too steep some quick-thinking passengers succeeded. These were people who should have survived, and a few of them who were ultra-fast did; but there was a catch to this route, and it was lethal. The principal stairways on the ship were built in a fore-aft direction—an orientation that allowed them to be scaled (by strong people, using the railings) at relatively steep angles of heel. This little stairway,

parents shouted at him to save himself, as did his girlfriend. It was practical advice. There was no time to linger over the decision. He turned and continued on alone.

On higher decks hundreds of similar tragedies unfolded, as the gathering crowds struggled up the main stairways and people exhausted their strength against the ever more difficult heel. Those no longer capable of movement clung to the railings or sat on the landings, just waiting for the end. People fell onto one another. One woman lost her husband to another woman that way. Among married couples the strong were delayed by the weak. It is evident from the rarity of single spouses among the survivors that many couples decided consciously to die together. These were not the sad, sweet moments one sees in the movies. There was no music playing. There was a strange, coded alarm announcement, "Mr. Skylight, to number one and number two," which was difficult to hear over the screaming. On every level the view from the main stairways was of carnage and confusion. People lay in the mouths of the hallways, unable to figure a way across the open spaces.

From the stairway some of the survivors saw a row of gambling machines fall onto passengers emerging from near the shop. The injured seem to have begged for help, but con-

Among married couples the strong were delayed by the weak. It is evident from the rarity of single spouses among the survivors that many couples decided consciously to die together.

in contrast, was built in a transverse direction—side-to-side—a detail which meant that as the list increased, the stairs went vertical and then inverted, cutting off the possibility even of retreat. Months later divers found so many bodies there that they could not get through to take a complete count.

Most of the passengers fled toward the main staircase at the center of the ship, emerging into the large open spaces that surrounded it on every deck, and then crawling or lunging as best they could to gain the banisters and railings. Handrails gave way from the start. As more people arrived, and the list increased, passengers began to slide and fall, and some were crushed by toppling equipment. The scenes of loss and bedlam defied coherent description by the survivors who witnessed them. On Deck 4 two women who had reached the staircase lost their grip and fell fatally against a wall. Others had already been badly injured, and some were lying apparently dead. Emotions among those unable to climb varied widely, with some people screaming incoherently, others seemingly listless and confused, and still others rational, self-contained, and brave. One of the survivors, a young man who had been trying to guide his parents and his girlfriend to safety, got separated from them in the chaos while gaining the stairs. When he looked back to find them, it was obvious that they would be incapable of negotiating the open space, across which increasing numbers of people were fatally sliding. His

conditions simply did not allow the witnesses on the stairways to intervene. The calculation was instinctive. To release one's grip on the railings for even a moment now was to fall, and to fall now was to perish. Up on Deck 7 at the top of the main stairways, where an open foyer spanned the ship, a few extraordinary people—both passengers and crew—were trying to help those emerging from the climb to get through the double doors to the high, portside promenade. People who failed to catch the doorframe slid on the carpeted deck and were killed or injured, or ended up on the starboard promenade, on the low side, from which they were washed into the sea early as the ship continued to topple. At least one of them survived. In any case, the race to freedom was nearing an end. At some point someone secured a rope to the portside promenade and dangled it down into the stairway. It was found in the wreck by divers, and probably came too late, since none of the survivors mentioned its use. The last known attempt on the doorway was made by a woman who lay hanging on to the threshold before losing her grip and sliding away.

At the rear of the ship on Deck 5, in a café called Neptuneus that adjoined the Pub Admiral, the ocean was flooding into the starboard side. A man there had been fighting hard to save his mother. He had removed his shoes and socks for a better grip, and was dragging his mother up-slope by bracing against the tables, which were mounted on

pillars and bolted solidly to the floor. The two had managed to stay out of the encroaching water, and, with periods of rest, had struggled to within two tables of a portside door that gave onto an open deck at the stern. At that point, however, his mother lost the last of her strength, and announced that she could go no farther. She was paralyzed not by fear or lack of will but by a simple physical fact: no matter what her mind said, her muscles would not perform. This was a reality her son now needed to understand. She lay on the floor, hanging on to a table with the ocean lapping up at her from behind, and insisted that he leave her. At first he refused, and shouted at her to keep going. But she could not, and as his mother she ultimately prevailed. He disappeared through the door, and found railings and fixtures that let him scale the ship's outside structure at angles of heel that by then were too steep to allow escape for even the strongest of the 700 people left inside.

The promenade decks, port and starboard, were lined with life-vest bins and cradles holding heavy life-raft canisters, and they were overhung by the large fiberglass lifeboats suspended from davits. Between difficulties caused by the angle of heel and the lack of coordinated action by the crew, none of the lifeboats were lowered. There were ten in all, five per side. Nine of them broke loose as the *Estonia* sank, and they floated to the surface as flotsam—damaged, overturned, swamped. For now, as the list steepened to 45 degrees, the starboard promenade tipped ominously toward the reach of the waves, and the port promenade did the opposite, tilting upward until its floor and Deck 7's exterior wall between them formed a perfectly balanced right angle, open to the sky like a V. Though initially the V stood on the ship's protected downwind side, as the capsizing continued, the incline of the sheltering wall diminished, and the promenade grew increasingly exposed to the wind and spray. That wall rose only one level, to the open, rooflike expanse of Deck 8. It became a floor when the starboard list increased beyond 45 degrees and the *Estonia* lay fully down to die. But even such imperfect shelter was preferable to the horror inside, and nearly all the escapees took refuge there, on the port promenade. In total there were perhaps 250 people. Some of the crew struggled individually to live up to the responsibility that had been vested in them. The situation nonetheless was beyond salvation, and chaos on the promenade was intense. The collective screams of the victims trapped below rose through the stairwells like a cacophony from hell, a protest that for some of those on the outside near the doors drowned out even the roar of the storm.

Some of the escapees panicked, crawling around on the promenade and adding to the screams from below, or begging hysterically for life vests, or sitting apathetically against the walls, or rushing to and fro without purpose like terrified creatures losing the last ground in a flood. Such reactions,

however, turned out to be the exception. Despite the unusual danger that confronted them on the ship's outsides, most of the escapees seemed to keep their wits about them. A brutal selection was at play, by which those who had succeeded in reaching the promenade tended by definition to be precisely the sort of people who could best handle the threat that awaited them there. They were fast and strong, and capable of quick calculation. Though their actions once outside were largely self-centered, with personal survival predominating over other concerns, many of the escapees proved able to work together to achieve that end—preparing and deploying the heavy life rafts, for instance, or attempting to free the lifeboats, however impossible that turned out to be. A few went further, and became genuinely altruistic. One man in particular comes to mind. He stood on the promenade looking completely composed, reassuring passengers around him that they would survive, patiently instructing people on how to don the life vests, and setting up an efficient system for the vests' distribution. Others played equally powerful roles. It was as if human society, having been torn apart, was starting to remake itself already—as if with time there could have been kings and queens on that drifting hull, and maybe even priests. But then the ocean washed them all away.

There was criminality, too, perhaps because among the various admirable characteristics being selected for, the less admirable traits of opportunism and raw aggression lay inextricably entwined. Indeed, some of the first people to follow Rolf Sörman and his three female companions outside onto the nearly empty promenade were brazen thieves—a band of young Estonian men who took advantage of the confusion to tear a gold chain off Sörman's neck and to strip cash and jewelry from the women. With startling speed they robbed others on the deck and then disappeared inside, apparently to work through the crowds that were just beginning to surge up the staircases. They were confident, as criminals tend to be, and they must not even have considered that the ship might then trap them, though the best evidence is that it did.

Sörman was angered by the assault. Still, preoccupied with finding adequate life vests for himself and the three women, he was soon confronted with aggression of a more dangerous kind. The problem started as fighting that broke out among passengers competing for life in the aft stairwell—violent behavior related to panic, but more focused and productive, which had the effect of intensifying the selection process under way and, especially toward the end, of delivering predators onto the port promenade, who had managed to come from behind and would stop at nothing to survive. A group of these people emerged from the stairwell as the list approached the cutoff of 45 degrees, and having fought their way to the promenade, they lunged at passengers already there, wrestling life vests from their grasp or tearing them off their backs. People fought back, of course, but some lost. It was not known what happened to

the victims, but if they went into the water without flotation gear, as some passengers did, it is fair to say that they were murdered. The effect of the fighting on Sörman and his companions was less direct, but serious enough. They were separated into two pairs—two women on one side, Sörman and the third woman on the other—and because of the risk of being attacked, they were unable to join up again. The first pair disappeared, and did not survive.

Sörman's sole companion now was a middle-aged Swede named Yvonne Bernevall, who had participated in the seminar with him but was not a close friend. Like Sörman, she was physically strong. To escape from the aggressors on the promenade, the two of them clambered up to the open expanse of Deck 8. It was quieter there. The deck (which, again, essentially served as the ship's roof) was like a steel beach angling down dangerously toward the oncoming waves. Its slopes, however, were covered by nonskid rubberized mats, and were interrupted by life-raft cradles, pipes and protuberances of various kinds, and the walls of higher structures, including most notably the captain's quarters and the navigation bridge above it, and the large midship funnel—all of which allowed for adequate purchase. As the ship continued to capsize and flood, its movement softened, with the unfortunate effect that the waves reached higher against the decks, plucking off victims in small groups or one by one. When the auxiliary engines failed and the lights flickered off, a new round of screaming erupted, but it quieted when the emergency generator kicked in. Increasing numbers of people arrived on Deck 8 (actually now climbing *down* to it), because the formerly upward V formed by the promenade had rotated so far to starboard that the alternative escape route, across its rails and onto the ship's port side, had risen beyond their reach.

The storm was howling, generating waves as high as twenty-eight feet. The ship was visibly sinking at the stern. Already the aft starboard corner of Deck 8 had gone under. Crew members and passengers were deploying the automatically inflating life rafts but having trouble with the wind, which blew unsecured rafts entirely away, and jammed others against railings and edges. The wastage was enormous. The ship had safety equipment for more than 2,000 people, but it was clear that among the few hundred escapees outside, many would go wanting. Desperation mounted. Getting the rafts into the water and then getting into them proved to be just about impossible. Many rafts when activated turned out to be underinflated anyway. There weren't enough good ones to keep up with demand. An apparently perfect raft suddenly inflated—complete with a tentlike canopy and a little flashing light—and in response a large crowd rushed it, far too many people to get in. Yvonne Bernevall wanted to rush it too, but Sörman was afraid of the crowd, no less for its mood than for its size, and he persuaded her to stay away. He was struggling with a life-raft container of their own, and had hopes of getting it open in time.

When the list was 80 degrees, as loud crashes came from inside the ship, a hatch popped open on the side of the funnel, and Sörman saw a terrified crewman emerge, having climbed up an internal escape ladder from the engine room. The crewman started shouting in English, "Water is coming in on the car deck!" until another crewman, having emerged beside him, smashed him in the face to calm him down. They disappeared down-deck together. The bridge windows were now breaking in the waves. The rubberized mats were coming off the decks, piling up in jumbles, falling onto swimmers in the water. Then the funnel reached the ocean's surface, marking a list of 90 degrees, and a cloud of acrid steam enveloped the ship as seawater touched the hot exhaust pipes inside. The electricity generator failed, and people screamed, but the batteries kicked in, illuminating fluorescent emergency lights. A rocket flare arced into the night. The ship's horn blew a loud and mournful good-bye. The hull began to invert. Faced suddenly with the prospect of the ship's rolling over on top of them, scores of people still hanging on to Deck 8 began to drop into the water and attempt to swim clear. They were on the dangerous, upwind, up-storm side. Some got tangled in wires and cranes, or were dragged down or killed by the impacts of the waves. At midship the heaviest waves crashed nearly to the top of the deck, and aft they surged entirely over it. Sörman had to abandon his hopes for the life raft in the container. He had no faith that his life vest would keep him alive. He sought the hand of Yvonne Bernevall for her company, and together they fell into the sea.

Pierre Thiger took the alternate route to the water that night, as did about half of the people on the promenade. When the deck's angle reached 45 degrees, and the promenade took the form of a perfectly balanced V, he climbed over the rail, and perched outside of it on an edge above the ship's portside surface expanse—the window-lined superstructure immediately beneath him, and the heavy steel hull farther below. Though the storm was growing worse, the moon emerged through a break in the clouds and lit the scene with its reflected light. A man lost his grip trying to cross the rail, and having won the race to freedom, having made it this far, he fell back and passed directly through the stairway doors, which gaped open like jaws to receive him. There were many such horrors that night. Nonetheless, crouched safely on his perch outside the rails, Thiger remained composed. Since he had left the Pub Admiral perhaps ten minutes had passed, or maybe twelve, but certainly not more. He had lost track of the acquaintance with whom he had spent the evening and then escaped, and in a strange way he was in his element now, a man who knew ships, acting logically and alone, with no need to explain himself and nothing to do but survive. He rode the ship as others might ride a horse. He was steady. He was patient. Even when the list grew to 80 degrees, he kept waiting to see whether the hull would find its equi-

THE BULL. THE BEAR.

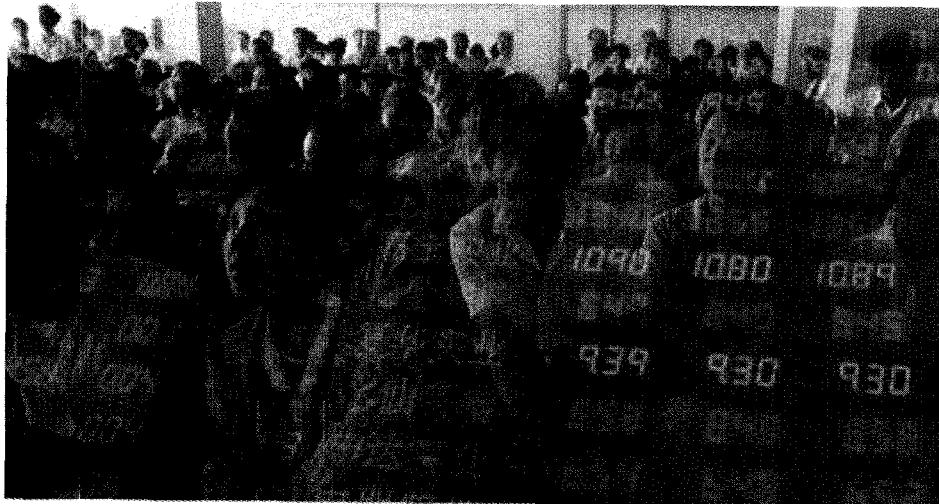
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librium and stabilize. When it did not, and he saw the funnel lie down and go under, he had the evidence he needed that the *Estonia* was inverting, so he left the railing and began to walk toward the keel across the superstructure's outsides. The ship no longer rocked much in the waves. Surf crashed over its stern, to his left. The steel underfoot was wet. He was careful not to fall through the windows into the darkened quarters below.

It is not known whether victims trapped in the cabins and common spaces saw Thiger or the others who navigated the superstructure while the hull was horizontal. From below the escapees would have seemed like shadows in a dream, passing overhead against a pale night sky. They would have seemed like fugitives on the run. One of them put his foot through a window and was injured but not caught. There was no communication between the two worlds, which had grown impossibly far apart. Altogether perhaps a hundred people made the trip across the outsides. By the time Thiger got to the lower hull, most of them had already arrived. A large group was bivouacked around a stabilizer fin, where it was possible to delay for a few minutes while the ship hesitated, lingering on its side. Soon, however, the movement resumed, and the group broke up as people joined the chaotic

dissolving into the sea. Between the force of the wind and the waves and the nearness of the end, there was no possibility for even the sort of embryonic society that had flickered on the Deck 7 promenade. Empty life vests and rafts both whole and ruined littered the water. People were scattered up and down the overturning hull—walking, crawling, lying down—and though some seemed to cluster, each of them in effect was alone. A couple was separated when the husband jumped into the water and beckoned to his wife, and out of terror she refused to go. As one by one they were picked off by the waves, Pierre Thiger got the impression that the ocean was reaching up to fetch them and drag them down. His own turn was coming soon. The ship had rolled to 135 degrees, halfway from prone to fully inverted, and the waves were surging all around. The water was so close that when a lifeboat that had broken loose smashed against the hull, Thiger was showered by pieces of shattered fiberglass.

The wave that took him caught him by surprise, hitting so quickly that he didn't see it coming, and he had no chance to draw a breath. He was pulled below the surface, came up, and was pulled below again on what seemed to him to be a long, long trip. The ocean bubbled and roared around his ears. Then he rose, and though he seemed to be drifting up-

The funnel reached the ocean's surface, marking a list of 90 degrees. A cloud of steam enveloped the ship as seawater touched the hot exhaust pipes inside. The ship's horn blew a loud and mournful good-bye.

ic migration—chased forward and across the curvature of the bottom by the settling at the stern and the ship's continuing roll. The heel grew to 110 degrees, and later to 120 degrees and more. Some of the escapees had managed to drag life rafts with them, but they were having the standard problems of getting them launched—troubles that were compounded by fights that broke out, and by the desperation that drove people to pile into rafts that were still too high on the hull. Those people were difficult to dislodge, though some fell out when the rafts eventually tumbled or slid into the water. Many of the canopies did not erect. Many of the rafts flipped upside down. One riot stands for others in those apocalyptic moments: after ten people threw themselves onto an inverted raft near the aft end of the hull, and others attacked en masse, trying to get on too, the entire assembly went sliding uncontrollably into the ocean, upside down, with people clustered in the middle and hanging on to the outside. This was a poor way to survive the Baltic in a storm on a September night.

So was every other way, however. What difference did it make to be altruistic and brave—indeed, what difference to be grasping? These were the people who had led the race, and it was as if they had been deceived, suddenly abandoned to chance. Their lives had been reduced to a rolling sliver of steel, a whaleback, the outside curvature of a bilge

ward forever, and though he swallowed water several times, he did not breathe the water in, and eventually he arrived on the surface. Empty life vests floated in abundance there, and he caught hold of several, along with a wooden plank for good measure. Driven by the wind, a line of life rafts disappeared behind the hull—like a string of pearls, Thiger thought, or a saint's-day procession. The waves would have seemed mountainous from his swimmer's height. They bore down on him with speed, carried him upslope to the crests, and then dropped him behind as they rushed on hissing into the night. Many of them were breaking, throwing powerful white cascades down their forward slopes, leaving scars of foam on their trails. The air was full of spume and spray. Thiger heard a frightened swimmer nearby, calling for help. Encumbered by his vests, he paddled over to assist him as best he could. Later he spotted a life raft, swam to it, and got in. It was characteristic of Thiger that he did not cower in fear but sat up to look outside. The *Estonia* was showing its keel and slowly sliding below the surface on a steep angle, stern first. It had raised its bulbous nose so high that parts of the bridge remained clear of the ocean's surface. Ever the observer, Thiger noticed that there was something very wrong with the front end—that the ship's openable bow had somehow fallen off. Thiger was face to face with the cause of the *Estonia's* demise.

Survival in the water was a desperate affair. The night was rent with the cries of invisible victims pleading for help, growing weak with the cold, moaning, going silent, and losing the fight to stay alive. Nothing could be done for them. Those without life vests simply slipped away. Those with life vests died on the surface, alone among the waves. Many who found their way to life rafts could not get in. Many who got in were then washed out, and had to get in all over again. Some did not succeed. Some did succeed, only to die once inside. The horror aboard the life rafts was compounded by anonymity and confusion. Twenty-two life rafts were occupied. They were not the protective cocoons one might imagine but flimsy assemblies of inflated tubes, half collapsed, that were flipped repeatedly by the breaking waves, flushed with frigid water, and often indistinguishable from the pandemonium of the sea.

Rolf Sörman never found even such shelter in a raft. When he took Yvonne Bernevall's hand and dropped with her from Deck 8 into the ocean, he knew the temperature of the water was lethal. He gave himself a few minutes at the most before he would succumb to the cold. But he was so keyed up that the water felt neutral when he plunged in. In Baltic terms that means it felt warm. When he hit the water, he kept holding Bernevall's hand. They went deep, and Sörman cleared his ears twice before the life vests prevailed over the momentum of their fall, and they started floating upward. Near the top Sörman was hit in the head by the foot of a frantic swimmer, and he yanked his hand from Bernevall's grasp in order to protect himself. For some seconds after he surfaced he thought she might have drowned, but then she appeared nearby. He swam over to her, and they clung together for a moment to keep from being driven apart by the force of the waves. They spoke. They had a sense of being tugged at from below, as if they were in the clutches of a vertical drift caused by the hull's subsidence. Staying close together, they swam away for about twenty-five yards, against the oncoming seas, until the sensation diminished. Again they held each other and spoke. It was essential that they find something to float on. Their position upwind from the *Estonia* gave them no chance of reaching the life rafts, which could not be secured or delayed on this, the storm-bashed side of the ship, and which once released went scooting downwind to the east. The situation was not entirely hopeless, however, because the *Estonia* itself was drifting eastward, slowing as it sank, but continuing to litter the waves in its trail with waterlogged, wind-resistant debris. Sörman and Bernevall struggled through the flotsam, hoping to discover an object large enough to serve them as a raft—furniture, for instance, or a section of wooden planking. It later turned out that one survivor had ridden a wooden cupboard for a while. But Sörman and Bernevall were not so lucky. They found nothing of use, and instead came suddenly upon a scene of the dead and dying—a cluster of corpses lying facedown in the waves, and among them several people still alive but

thrashing violently during the final throes of drowning. In their haste to avoid entanglement Sörman and Bernevall split apart—he striking to the left, she to the right. Minutes later, when they tried to join up again, they could not. Sörman saw Bernevall floating high on top of a wave when he was at its bottom. He swam for her, but when he saw her next she had drifted farther away. After that she was lost.

Sörman turned to swim back toward the *Estonia*, when suddenly his life vest came off, the flotation collar peeling over his head. He jammed it back on and tightened the straps, but it came off again. Five times this happened in rapid succession, reducing Sörman to near panic, until he realized that the wind from behind was to blame. He faced away from the *Estonia* and toward the wind, which solved the problem. He then tried to build a raft by stacking up ten squares of the rubberized deck matting that he found nearby. The squares were not designed to float, and they barely did, offering little more support in combination than alone. Sörman had to give up on his raft. At that point, however, an overturned lifeboat came into view, riding bow-down and low, with its keel just a few inches above the surface. The front end was completely smashed in. Sörman had the impression that the lifeboat had just emerged from the depths. He swam to it and squirmed up onto the keel, emerging partially from the water. As many as seven others did the same. Sörman helped several of them up onto the keel. The most vulnerable was a young dancer who had a nasty head wound and was frightened and weak; Sörman grabbed her by her jacket and began his second losing fight for the life of a woman that night.

Conditions on the overturned lifeboat were extraordinarily tough, with wind-driven rain and ocean spray as cold as sleet, and breaking waves that kept sweeping across the hull. The man who had found the safest position, at the stern, made no attempt to help the others, and clung with both hands to the propeller shaft in a full-blown panic, wailing prayers and loudly calling to God. For the sake of his own nerves and the courage of others, Sörman shouted at him repeatedly to stop, but the man was beyond reach, and he did not. The overturned lifeboat drifted directly toward the mutilated front end of the *Estonia's* hull, now heavily inverted and in the last stages of sinking into the sea. Aboard the lifeboat nothing could be done but to go for the ride. At the last moment, just when it seemed they might be smashed against the hull, they were swept slightly forward and began to pass directly under the ship's front end. An instant later, in the confusion of a nightmare, they passed into the flooded entrance of a huge dark tunnel that was swallowing the surging waves. It was the open end of the car deck, the gaping wound left when the bow fell off. Sörman realized that he had not escaped the *Estonia* after all—that it would catch him now and take him down. Unable to endure the sight, he turned his head away in fear. When finally he found the courage to look again, the *Estonia* was gone. ■

THE FRONT-RUNNER'S FALL

The Dean implosion up close, from the vantage point of the candidate's pollster

BY PAUL MASLIN

Illustration by Matthew Bandsuch

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The 2004 Democratic nomination was decided in Iowa. John Kerry's decision to focus his efforts in the Hawkeye State, with the support of a \$6.4 million loan secured by his home, paid off handsomely: Kerry rallied in the final two weeks to upset Howard Dean, and surged to an easy win in New Hampshire just eight days later. The rest of the states then fell like dominoes.

Dean and his chief strategists—Joe Trippi, the campaign manager; the media consultants Steve McMahon and Mark Squier; and I—were not surprised: winning Iowa had been the heart of our own victory plan. As was the case with so many other parts of our campaign, somebody stole our hopes along the way. This is the story of how it happened.

THE BENCHMARK POLL

Polling in Iowa is both important and impossible. The vagaries of the caucus process make it very difficult to predict who might actually turn out on caucus night and to target those voters in a poll sample. The problems are compounded because Iowa voters have become “professional,” and they know it is to their advantage to delay making up their minds.

Our first stab-in-the-dark-attempt was in late April of 2003, nine months before the caucuses. It confirmed some of Howard Dean's most fervent hopes about the state: he was actually in the lead among Iowans who had attended a caucus in the past and said they would definitely go this time. But it exposed a serious weakness: he was virtually unknown to many Iowans, particularly those inclined to support the 1988 Iowa winner, Richard Gephardt, of Missouri. The data also hinted that John Kerry could become a formidable candidate and that John Edwards was a direct threat to Dean. The overall results were these: Gephardt, 34 percent; Kerry, 16 percent; Joseph Lieberman, 15 percent; Dean, 10 percent; Edwards, six percent; others, four percent; undecided, 15 percent.

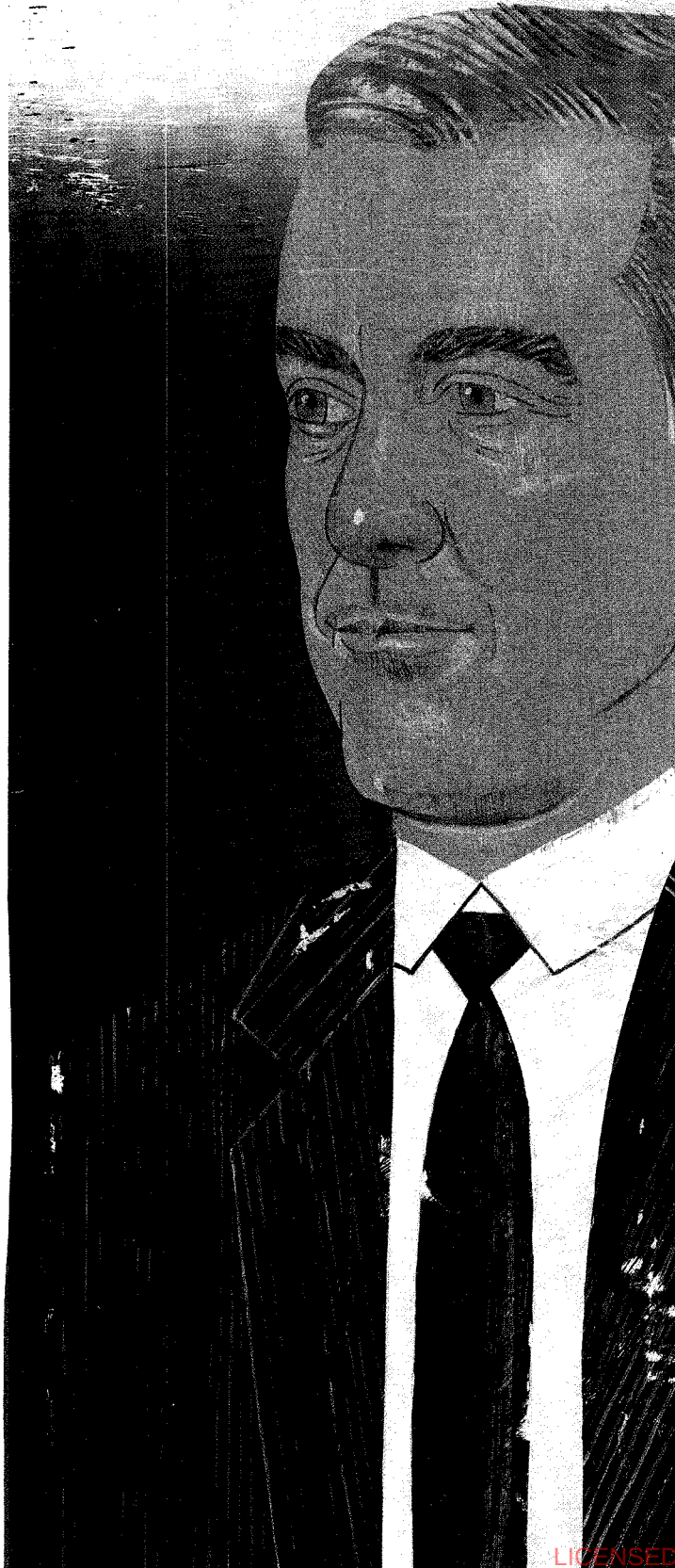
Some revealing additional findings came out of that first poll. One concerned the war in Iraq. Dean's support was 24 percent among those who strongly opposed the war; 13 percent among those who somewhat opposed it;

and only six percent among those who favored it. Nearly three quarters of our sample opposed the war. The lesson for our planning purposes was that antiwar messages were among our least effective means of increasing Dean's support. We already had most of the core antiwar vote.

The second finding involved the dynamics among the candidates. It was clear even then that Kerry and Edwards posed a threat to us; support for the three tended to overlap. As I wrote in a memo just after the April poll, “In some ways Dean and Edwards are battling to be the ‘New Face’ ... just as Dean and Kerry have been battling over who is the ‘True Democrat.’” The scenario was very different when it came to Joe Lieberman. We thought Lieberman had probably peaked in this first poll, where he was a strong third, and that his center-right run would fail badly among Iowa's liberal voters. Still, the votes Lieberman got would come mainly at the expense of candidates other than Howard Dean. We needed him to stay in the race in Iowa to sap others' support; unfortunately, he pulled out of the state in the fall.

The third finding had to do with biography and record. More than any other, this one showed how John Kerry might actually win. Not counting Lieberman, there were two Washington-establishment candidates in the race—Gephardt and Kerry. And there were two non-establishment, non-Washington candidates—Dean and Edwards (who is serving his first term in the Senate). Voters did not indicate a clear preference for one kind of candidate over the other. In the April poll we found that 36 percent of voters would support a candidate “whose main experience is in Washington, D.C., as a member of Congress,” and 32 percent would support a candidate “whose main experience is outside of Washington, D.C., as a governor.” But when voters were asked to make a choice based on job description and without knowing the candidates' names, the winner was a “lawyer/congressional leader” (Gephardt) over a “medical doctor/governor” (Dean), by 49 to 18 percent. “Vietnam vet/

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senator” also won over “medical doctor/governor,” by 49 to 17 percent. In the actual Iowa-caucus vote, nine months later, Kerry and Gephardt together received 49 percent, and Dean 18 percent.

Fortunately from our point of view, when voters heard briefly about the qualifications of each candidate by name, including Dean’s record in Vermont (providing health care, balancing budgets, and so on), Dean was the only candidate to gain support; he moved ahead of Lieberman and Kerry into a strong second against Gephardt. We knew we could probably never win an outright battle of the bios, but a fight about the candidates’ achievements as elected officials looked promising. When we met to discuss these results, we debated the odds of defeating Gephardt in Iowa, and whether a second-place finish would be acceptable for us. It was a short debate; we decided to go for the win.

GOING UP EARLY

Since the campaign-finance reforms of the 1970s, primary campaigns have lived with the reality of what’s known as “the cap.” To be eligible for federal matching funds, candidates have to keep their spending below per-state limits that are set by a complex formula. In practice the cap has really mattered only in the first two states, Iowa and New Hampshire—and in 2004 it would matter in a new way, because the McCain-Feingold law stiffened the penalties for exceeding the cap. Late in 2003 the Dean campaign decided to opt out of the public-financing system, which meant it could spend as much money as it wished. But before that decision, in the early summer of 2003, it had to calculate when it could start running expensive TV ads without using up cap money too soon.

We were acutely conscious that any sustained flight of television advertising—we were considering running ads for two weeks—was going to take a big bite out of our cap. I assumed that we would proceed carefully and not consider airing anything until after the Fourth of July. So imagine my surprise when Howard Dean burst into our Burlington headquarters on the afternoon of Friday, June 6, followed not long after by Joe Trippi, and announced that we were going to “go up” in Iowa.

“Kerry’s planning to go up,” Dean said. “We’ve got to be there first. We can’t let him get the jump on us.”

“I think we’re going to do the focus groups after we run the ads,” Trippi added. This turned the usual procedure on its head; for obvious reasons, ads are generally tested with focus groups before they air.

Two things have become clear in the many months since that moment in June. The first is the extent to which Howard Dean based his campaign on John Kerry’s. He didn’t like Kerry; he wanted to beat him; even when things were good, he worried about him. In many ways the two men were polar opposites—the small, feisty doctor, who talked in bursts and in common language and often without think-

ing; the tall, aloof soldier-turned-politician, who always tried to strike a lofty pose and seemed to consider every word he uttered. Both were born to privilege. Dean turned his back on it and fell into politics from the outside. Kerry, too, rejected its comforts, and fought in, and later protested against, a war that made his political career possible; but he never seemed to shed his patrician skin. On that June day, as far as Dean was concerned, the reason to “go up” in Iowa was to beat Kerry to the punch.

The second thing is that Howard Dean and Joe Trippi, although their work styles were such that they rarely spoke to each other (and they would ultimately part ways), were nevertheless on the exact same tactical page most of the time—if not always for the same reason. And when they were, bold action usually ensued.

By June of 2003 we understood our candidate and his message pretty well. Our ads would be thirty-second standups, Howard Dean talking straight to the camera and laying out what this race was all about: confronting George Bush, opposing the war in Iraq, providing health care to all Americans. The ads basically wrote themselves, and they clearly struck a chord (even though they were filmed in Vermont, and in the background featured an old Ford tractor instead of a John Deere, to which Iowans are partial). They helped fuel a national pro-Dean momentum that crested at the end of the month. Independent polls began to show us challenging Gephardt for the lead in Iowa, months before we had even hoped to do so. But they came with a price—one that far exceeded the \$300,000 we spent on them.

We learned dangerous lessons from those ads: that we could work fast, with virtually no preparation; that it paid to be bold; and that we could spend money at a time that no sane campaign ever would or ever had. In late August, after Dean had completed a triumphant national tour, Trippi decided to push more chips onto the table and persuaded us to spend a million dollars on advertising in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Washington, and Wisconsin. Jeani Murray, our Iowa state director, had a simple and blunt reaction: “And nothing for Iowa?”

WESLEY CLARK

Howard Dean's momentum continued through the summer; despite the initial skepticism of the Democratic establishment. The first obvious setback came in mid-September, when General Wesley Clark entered the race.

It would be hard to overstate the initial shock to our system when Wesley Clark entered the race. Two views prevailed about Clark. The Dean campaign saw him as a real threat: the only other guy to share our outsider message who could raise money and run a national effort. To most D.C. types—the same people who had failed to understand or predict our ascendancy—he was a rookie; he would make

mistakes and bomb out eventually. Both views proved to be right. But in mid-September Clark was nothing but trouble for us; with his campaign diverting money, our fundraising slowed for the first time. This is relative: we still raised a record amount in the third quarter of 2003—nearly \$15 million. But it might have been three or four million more without Clark. Endorsements were put on hold, and our aura of invincibility was dimmed, at least for a time.

A few days before Clark was expected to make his announcement, the other Democratic hopefuls gathered in Indianola, Iowa, for the Steak Fry—an annual political get-together hosted by Iowa's Senator Tom Harkin, who had conducted voter forums with each of the candidates over the past several months. Former President Bill Clinton, the star attraction, praised virtually every candidate in the field but then advised the crowd, which consisted almost entirely of rabid supporters of one candidate or another, that although first they'd “fall in love,” ultimately they must “fall in line.” It was hard to mistake that for anything other than a shot across our bow—and in our minds it clearly indicated that Clinton was, as the rumor mill suggested, secretly pushing for General Clark. Trippi weighed in with his own concern a few days after the Steak Fry, which he had attended. “It's not right in Iowa,” he said. “I could feel it there. It's not right.”

Despite Trippi's fears, our poll numbers held in Iowa through September: we now had a four-to-six-point lead over Dick Gephardt, with John Kerry still a solid third but essentially motionless, and with John Edwards mired in single digits. On September 24 and 25, when it was not clear whether Clark would be competing in the Iowa caucuses (ultimately he did not), we conducted a new poll that in its focus on comparing the candidates revealed more of the emerging contours of the race. Dean held solid advantages over his competitors when it came to who represented change, who would stand up to Bush, and who was bringing new energy and volunteers into politics.

Despite these strengths, the results revealed some bad signs about where the race was going. First, although Dean led the field on who would best stand up to Bush, a quarter of likely caucus-goers thought all the candidates would stand up to him equally. To us, this suggested that our message was being borrowed and diffused. Second, 13 percent thought Kerry was the candidate best described as having “opposed the war,” despite his vote in favor of it. His circuitous statements on that subject may not have been helping him in New Hampshire, where Dean's lead was increasing, or with media insiders, but plenty of Iowans still thought he was against the war.

The third finding that raised a red flag was the so-called “electability” question: Dean's lead was narrower here, and Kerry was already in second place. Kerry's hope, it seemed at the time, was that the discussion would swing back to foreign policy, where his more “presidential” qualities could come into play.

A FULL DOSE OF TRIPPI

Joe Trippi was the principal force in pushing the campaign to unprecedented heights of grassroots activism and small-donor fundraising. His brilliance was obvious to all, and it wasn't limited to his innovative use of the Internet, which defined so much of the Dean campaign. He was also a visionary of the highest order, able to see both the opportunities and the risks with which this campaign was constantly presented. Yet he was a poor manager—and in fact he was never even given a full opportunity to work as one, because Dean decided early that Trippi should not have budgetary authority. Joe was an irascible leader who rarely understood the need to buck up those around him when things went wrong; instead he either lashed out at the offender, usually with good cause, or often retreated to his corner office and behind his computer, giving off such strong vibrations of doom and darkness that even the most trusted and loyal members of his staff did not dare disturb him. Trippi was the one person other than Dean—and at times the *only* person, including Dean—who could be counted on to stay on message, yet he so jealously guarded his press contacts and attention that even his closest associates were

closest aide, for the holdup; he left the candidate's suite, threw his cell phone down the corridor, and screamed, "That bitch!"

Through it all, even on the good days, Joe would look at us with that intense and very dark glare of his and ask, "What about Iowa?" He had campaigned in the state at least three times before: as a young staffer for Ted Kennedy in his unsuccessful primary effort against Jimmy Carter, in 1980; as the Iowa director for Walter Mondale, in 1984; and as Dick Gephardt's deputy campaign manager, in 1988. He had certain ideas about how to win the caucuses and was increasingly frustrated that the Iowa staff seemed to be carrying out none of them. "You need a person running each county who is *in* that county, no matter how small it is," he said. "This campaign has a bunch of kids in regional headquarters that never go out into the counties. You need a precinct captain for every one of the nearly two thousand precincts. Jeani doesn't believe in that. I keep asking, and they can't tell me how many we have. And you need a hard count of ones [political parlance for strong supporters who have said they'll back the candidate]—that's what Mondale did. That's what Gephardt did, and he's doing it again. Our cam-

Summer polls showed us challenging Gephardt for the lead in Iowa. But after an Iowa get-together hosted by Senator Tom Harkin, Joe Trippi said, "It's not right in Iowa. I could feel it there. It's not right."

wary of talking to the media for fear of alienating him. He believed passionately in Howard Dean's message, yet he allowed himself to become almost a rival messenger; he came to be viewed, by supporters and detractors alike, as the true core of the campaign, more so even than the candidate himself.

It should have been no surprise that normal petty jealousies and staff rivalries, when combined with a full dose of Trippi, led to a very dysfunctional organization. (Trippi would often joke, "If these other campaigns only knew what this campaign is really like ...") Slightings, real and imagined, bred accusations that were hurled back and forth in our Burlington office or in hushed phone conversations around the country. Joe threatened to leave more than once, predicting disaster all along; those who were not fans of his threatened on several occasions to have Dean replace him. At one point he overturned a desk in rage in front of his personal assistant, Kristen Morgante, who not surprisingly walked out of the office and didn't return until two days later, after Trippi had apologized. Another characteristic outburst occurred in a hotel in Des Moines, when Dean balked at Trippi's idea of putting out a pamphlet aping Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* because he had been given only a couple of days to review it before the printing deadline. Trippi blamed Kate O'Connor, Dean's

campaign doesn't know how many ones it has, and I keep asking for it!"

THE PINCUSHION

Life as the front-runner was never comfortable for Howard Dean. He knew that by declaring war on the party and its establishment for their failure to oppose Bush strongly enough, he was guaranteeing a vicious and constant response. He complained many times about Kerry's attacks, and occasionally about Lieberman's, but he always felt that Gephardt would be different. "I supported Dick in 1988," he said to me one day on the trail. "Worked for him. He may criticize me on the issues, but it'll never get personal." I disagreed, since I had already seen Gephardt in action against a candidate standing in his way. (I had polled for Paul Simon, whom Gephardt narrowly defeated in Iowa in 1988.)

By October, Dean started to understand. He was becoming, as he described it in the campaign's final weeks, a "pincushion." Kerry would attack him for his desire to repeal all the Bush tax cuts, even those aimed at the middle class. So would Lieberman—and Mr. Moderate would then launch into a diatribe against Dean's views on foreign policy and national security. In one speech Lieberman said that Howard Dean was giving the Democratic Party a "tick-

et to nowhere.” Al Sharpton would attack from his post as the self-proclaimed representative of black America, looking for any and all evidence that Dean didn’t know or understand “his” people. John Edwards would do the same from the South—which meant that when Dean talked about wanting the support of all voters, including the guys with Confederate-flag decals on their pickup trucks, he gave both Sharpton and Edwards a chance to be aggrieved.

But the most serious damage was coming from Dick Gephardt and his labor minions in Iowa, who relentlessly attacked Dean for his supposed weakness on Medicare and Social Security and his prior support of NAFTA. Although Dean’s personal ratings remained strong, the Gephardt barrage took its toll. When, on October 29, we completed the first night of a new poll, Gephardt had retaken the lead in Iowa (by an impressive margin) for the first time in more than three months.

We had decided to test two messages in that poll. One stressed the story of the campaign and its reliance on small givers—in essence arguing that Dean would be uniquely able to break the power of special interests. It produced a good but hardly overwhelming response. The other likened Bush’s handling of the economy to the practices of Enron—in both cases the rich and powerful made off with the money while ordinary people got screwed. This message tested much better.

The day after that first night of polling, Dean reached me as I was driving south from Washington with my wife and two daughters to visit my son at the University of Virginia. In a typically incongruous campaign moment, as our car hurtled through scenes of glorious fall foliage, Dean asked me what we intended to do to turn Iowa around. I described to him the two messages we were testing. His response was immediate: “O-kaaaay. What about the war?” I said we could add a question or two about Gephardt’s vote to support Bush’s recent request for \$87 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan. So then, as my wife explained disapprovingly to our eleven-year-old that “this is how those horrible negative ads are made,” I dictated to my office a new question to insert into the second night of polling.

The result was crystal clear: 56 percent of Iowans took our view on the war, and only 35 percent agreed with Gephardt. The ad Steve McMahon and Mark Squier produced the following week had just the right tone to be deadly effective: as the screen showed a picture of Gephardt in the White House Rose Garden with Bush and other congressional leaders, a female announcer declared, “October 2002—Dick Gephardt agrees to co-author the Iraq War resolution, giving George Bush the authority to go to war”; the spot switched soon after to Dean’s saying “I opposed the war in Iraq and I’m against spending another \$87 billion there.” We didn’t need a focus group to tell us this would be a devastating ad. But we needed to wait be-

fore running it, because the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner in Des Moines was slated for the upcoming weekend, with Hillary Clinton as the emcee. We didn’t want to strike the first negative blow of the campaign before such a high-profile event.

Our ad began to air the week following that dinner, on Monday, November 17. For several days Gephardt’s campaign didn’t respond, and when it did, its ad was confusing. It tried to allege that Dean had actually supported Bush’s recent funding request—and that he had promised not to attack other candidates for backing it. This kind of debate about the war was just what the doctor had ordered. We shot back into the lead. In this poll nearly 60 percent of Iowans said Dean was the candidate who could best be described as opposing the war, and 40 percent fingered Gephardt as the candidate who could best be described as favoring it.

Once again, we thought we had learned an important lesson: the war could bail us out of trouble. But we failed to notice a big problem with our singling out Gephardt as the pro-war candidate: almost no Iowans were thinking of Kerry and Edwards as candidates who had supported the war, even though both had supported the original resolution.

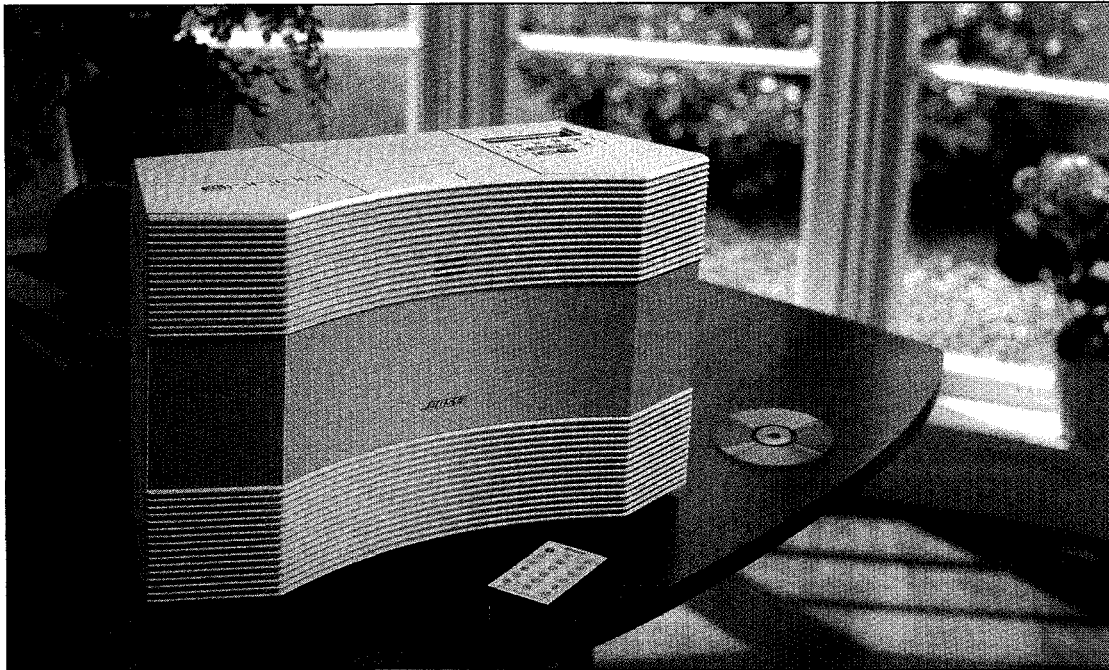
TAPPING THE EGG

All of us involved in the Dean campaign made mistakes, for sure. But to be fair, our candidate’s erratic judgment, loose tongue, and overall stubbornness wore our spirits down. He refused to be scripted, to be disciplined, or to discipline himself, in his remarks about everything from the Red Sox and the Yankees to Middle Eastern diplomacy. I later likened it all to repeatedly tapping an egg against the edge of a kitchen counter: eventually the egg would break. That’s what happened in Iowa.

Several times during the campaign we had attempted to change the cast of characters accompanying Dean, so someone could help shield him from increasingly tough or persistent media questioning or, at least, recognize and fix problems on the spot. We desperately needed an “adult” (preferably one the candidate knew and respected) to help provide some stability around him, or simply to take him to the woodshed when he did screw up, to reduce the chances of its happening again. Such a person didn’t exist in Howard Dean’s personal orbit, and the campaign never found one for the job.

But the bigger problem was Dean himself—the enemies he had made and the process that had made him a target. The other campaigns’ responses to our success intensified in the fall. At one point Gephardt’s campaign created a Web site, Deanfacts.com, reserved for attacks on Dean’s record. John Kerry chafed at all the media attention we were getting and once muttered in frustration, “Dean. Dean. Dean. Dean. Dean,” not realizing he was near a live mike.

What did we expect? Our candidate was the front-



It seems small. Until you turn it on.

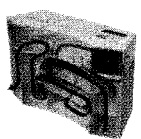
The Bose® Acoustic Wave® music system. The biggest thing about it is the sound.

It measures just 10 1/2" H x 18" W x 7 3/4" D and fits on an end table. But turn it on, and you'll hear rich, life-like, room-filling sound. In fact, the *Chicago Tribune* said the Acoustic Wave® music system produces "big, bold sound" that places it "at the forefront of compact music systems." No other system this size produces the same deep lows and natural sound.

The key to this sound is our patented waveguide speaker technology. Just as a flute strengthens a breath of air to fill a concert hall, the waveguide produces room-filling sound from a small enclosure. It's no wonder the waveguide won its team of Bose engineers the prestigious "Inventor of the Year" award.

Easy-to-use features.

As small as it is, the Acoustic Wave® music system is big on features. A



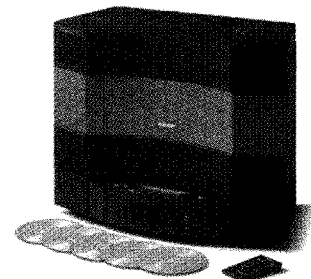
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runner. But then we made ourselves more vulnerable with our handling of his gubernatorial records.

Before his run for President, Dean had decided to seal some of his records for ten years, and when he was asked about it in Vermont, in January of 2003, he made a curious statement. Although he later claimed that he had been speaking in jest, he basically admitted that he had wanted to avoid potential embarrassment in some future race. This campaign prided itself on trying to make American politics more transparent and accessible, and Dean had railed at the secret energy commission chaired by Dick Cheney—and yet had sealed his records, seemingly for the sake of personal ambition.

By early December the press was ready to pounce. Dean had changed his tactic, basically trying to go *mano a mano* with another former governor. “I’ll unseal mine,” he said, “if he will unseal his.” The problem was that technically Bush’s Texas gubernatorial records were “open,” even though in practice getting access to them would be time-consuming. Within a day the campaign staff realized that our position was untenable. We tried to talk a reluctant Dean into authorizing a full release, hopeful that any damaging revelations might still be months away. We were hoping, at any rate, that they would come out after Iowa and New Hampshire.

At first Dean seemed receptive, and even seemed to suggest a forthcoming full disclosure to the media, but he first wanted to discuss the issue with us in person. On Wednesday, December 3, in the campaign’s ratty Burlington conference room, Dean met with about fifteen of his senior campaign staffers and top consultants. I felt that failing to release the records would be more damaging than anything the records might contain. It would fly in the face of the campaign’s whole message of openness and change, and would reveal Dean as just another politician. But others, who had known him longer, were more circumspect. They were particularly concerned about the weekly memos Dean was given as governor, on which he would write comments. Nobody could remember a precise example, but all, including Dean himself, thought that he had probably insulted many major political players in Vermont in those comments, including Democrats and Democratic-leaning interest groups.

Dean was increasingly uncomfortable with the discussion, and I felt some regret for pressing so hard when, in the end, he lowered his head and said to us all, but mostly to himself, “I’d rather end the campaign than have the world see everything.” Seldom have I heard a candidate so open about his feelings (one of Dean’s refreshing qualities); more seldom still have I seen someone on the brink of political success be so conflicted about it. To this day I am convinced that no “smoking gun” exists in those records. What is probably there is an accumulation of cuts from a man who routinely made acidic or even profane comments to all around him, in conversation and in writing.

I felt worse half an hour later, when—after Dean had left the headquarters having decided not to release the records—Trippi called McMahon, Squier, and me into his office. He shut the door and said in a compassionate voice, rare for him, “He just lost it in here. He basically told me that he never thought he’d be in this position. Never thought he could ever win. Never thought it would come to all this. He was just about in tears, and for once, I really feel for him. He said, ‘I don’t know why I say the things I do.’ He ain’t gonna release the records, even if it costs us everything.”

SADDAM HUSSEIN AND AL GORE

On December 9 Al Gore endorsed Howard Dean. The next Saturday, December 13, Saddam Hussein was captured near Tikrit. The former seemed like a huge boost for Dean’s prospects: a day later Dean rose to a double-digit lead in Iowa. But ultimately both events were setbacks.

Dean was already scheduled to give a foreign-policy address in Los Angeles the Monday after Saddam’s capture. In a rare moment when he, the policy staff, Trippi, and the consultants agreed that playing “front-runner” was smart, he had planned to give a reassuring speech. He would not back down from his opposition to the war in Iraq, but he would remind the media and the foreign-policy establishment that he had supported the 1991 Gulf War, the war in Kosovo, and the war in Afghanistan. The implied message was that although his view of the world differed greatly from Bush’s, he was very much in the mainstream of foreign-policy thinking. A brief section was added to address the news of the day. Then, as he was being driven to the speech, Dean inserted an entirely new line: “The capture of Saddam Hussein has not made America safer.”

The best thing about Howard Dean is his willingness to say what he thinks and stand his ground. There is no question in my mind—and, as it turns out, most Democrats’ minds—that his statement was dead on. But to hear our opponents and the press tell it, Dean had just told the American people that two plus two equals sixty-seven. The reaction hurt us immediately in Iowa.

We polled previous caucus attendees just after the endorsement, and three days after Saddam’s capture we polled again. I was stunned to find that our lead had been sliced to just three points, with Kerry now in second place. Dean’s favorability rating had also taken a hit for the first time in the campaign.

Favorability Ratings (1–100 scale)

Candidate	Dec. 9–10	Dec. 16–18
Dean	69.4	63.7
Gephardt	64.3	66.0
Kerry	63.4	66.5
Edwards	59.2	59.8

In one week Dean's rating had dropped from No. 1 among the four major candidates to No. 3. Nearly six points may not seem like much, but it was the single biggest weekly drop we ever found for any candidate in this race. And for the first time John Kerry's rating was now the highest, by a slim margin. Perhaps most ominous, we had measured Al Gore's favorability rating at the time of the endorsement and a week later; it fell from 61.4 to 58.9. Was there a backlash against Gore himself, perhaps because the media were giving full attention to his failure to make even a heads-up call to Lieberman, his former running mate? Probably so. But there was something else afoot—something that, it is now clear, was a portent.

In the eyes of the media Gore's endorsement had branded Dean as the man to beat. Indeed, from that point on a majority of likely caucus-goers felt that Dean would probably win the caucuses and go on to capture the nomination. But in one important subgroup of Iowans a plurality said that Gore's endorsement made them *less* likely to support Dean. This group was made up of Gore's own supporters in the 2000 caucuses. I did a double take when I saw those results, as did everyone I told about them. They were entirely counterintuitive, but further review revealed their supporting logic.

We all made mistakes, for sure. But Dean's erratic judgment, loose tongue, and overall stubbornness in refusing to be scripted, to be disciplined, or to discipline himself wore our spirits down.

- Al Gore's 2000 voters were party regulars, as much committed to Bill Clinton as to Gore. Some probably blamed Gore for the 2000 defeat.
- Gore's 2000 voters were older and more blue-collar than the supporters of his opponent, the former New Jersey senator Bill Bradley. That didn't fit the Dean-voter profile in Iowa.
- Gore's 2000 voters were classic Iowa caucus-goers: proud of their role in the process, and not about to let anyone tell them what to do—not the media, and not even the party's former standard-bearer.

So a week after Gore's endorsement—the most stunning event in a consistently surprising campaign, and an event that seemed to many to lock up the nomination for Dean—we were faced with the realization that it had little if any value.

BLACK SUNDAY

On Thursday, January 8, the Dean campaign was rocked by the news that NBC was airing a videotape of its candidate, as a guest commentator on a Canadian public-affairs program several years earlier, criticizing the Iowa caucuses. The tape dominated Iowa news coverage through the following weekend, even overshadowing Dean's endorsement by the popular Tom Harkin.

Then, that Sunday, January 11, came three negative developments: the state's dominant newspaper, The Des Moines Register, endorsed John Edwards; Dean shouted down a Republican heckler at a campaign event; and, exhausted and unbriefed, Dean was forced to admit, under fire from Al Sharpton, that he had never hired an African-American to a cabinet post during his time as the governor of Vermont.

Our poll that Sunday night, a week before the caucuses, showed the expected results: Dean had now fallen into a virtual three-way tie with Kerry and Gephardt, and Edwards was riding close on our heels. Our favorability rating had plummeted to a new low, just as those of Kerry and Edwards had started to rise, in part because they were liberally borrowing our message of populism and empowerment. I had seen this movie before: after weeks of declining support, Paul Simon had received the *Register's* endorsement and surged in the final week before the 1988 Iowa caucuses, and had nearly caught Gephardt. I began to think that Edwards might win and Dean might finish third.

Dean, Trippi, and our strategic team huddled on the telephone early the next morning and made a quick deci-

sion: we needed to put out a negative ad about Gephardt and Iraq again, this time with pictures of Kerry and Edwards tacked on, in an attempt to associate them with a pro-war position. We never tested this ad. We never even had an extensive discussion about the pros and cons of running it. It was the biggest mistake we could have made, and it kept me up at night for weeks afterward. Someone—and why not I?—should have thought through the precise implications of the ad copy and its likely impact on the entire field.

When we ran the ad, it barely brushed the intended targets—Kerry and Edwards—but delivered a devastating blow to Gephardt. Quite naturally, he fought back—with a “kitchen sink” negative ad on us, which ran midweek. That ad, which attacked Dean's views on Medicare and Social Security, snuffed out what little chance we had left at victory—Dean and Gephardt were both increasingly seen by Iowans as running negative campaigns. The exchange, called off within days by both sides, nevertheless sent us hurtling to a crushing defeat instead of a narrow loss that we should have been able to endure. Had the vote been closer, I believe, there would have been no “I have a scream” speech on caucus night. All the habits we had learned so early in this race—work fast, use Iraq, be aggressive—were coming back to haunt us.

THE PERFECT STORM

Once the Dean campaign opted out of public financing and was free to spend as much as it chose in Iowa, Joe Trippi endorsed a "flood the zone" strategy. The campaign would keep up its expensive TV-advertising schedule. But flooding the zone also meant unleashing paid staff members, volunteers, and every other possible organizational tool to rouse the likely caucus-goers in Iowa. A final stage of this effort brought in thousands of out-of-state volunteers to make phone calls, stand on street corners, and go door-to-door across the state.

I've long felt that campaigns are akin to high-altitude climbing. You make your plans in the fresh, oxygen-filled air of sea level. You gradually journey up, working as a team, dealing with each challenge as it presents itself. But in a campaign's final days, when the key decisions must be made, you're in the equivalent of the death zone, harried and short of time and breath. If you do the wrong thing, the consequences are fatal. Our team was a good one, and we generally worked well together. Howard Dean had the right temperament to make truly tough decisions. He listened carefully, asked questions, and was decisive when he needed to be. But the experience of the

cisive: we would finish a poor third to Kerry and Edwards. We met Dean at his new campaign bus to discuss the events to follow. Dean was in no mood to linger in Iowa. A late flight awaited to what he hoped would be a more welcoming venue, in New Hampshire, but first he had to endure the necessary parade of network interviewers, all wanting him to tell them what went wrong.

We tried hard to cheer him up, and we explained the importance of seeming confident in those interviews. He did beautifully in each of them. But nobody had bothered to write up a concession speech or even a few lines to use when he faced the crowd waiting in the Val Air Ballroom, many of them Stormers. It was as if we were all in shock, and didn't even consider the importance of his first election-night appearance in front of a national television audience. A week later, in New Hampshire, we and he wouldn't make that mistake. But by then it was too late. Dean needed an immediate release that night in Iowa—a release from the pounding, the pressure, and the poor finish.

It came in the form of that famous speech—and somehow it was fitting that in this roller-coaster ride of a campaign, which Joe Trippi and Howard Dean had both bragged was a fifty-state campaign, the candidate's doom

"He just lost it in here," Joe Trippi told us. "He basically told me that he never thought he'd be in this position. Never thought he could win. Never thought it would come to all this. He was just about in tears."

climb had worn us all down by the time of the Iowa vote. The summit was receding into the clouds.

Thirty-five hundred mostly young out-of-state Dean supporters descended on Iowa for what the Iowa campaign staff had billed as the "Perfect Storm." Iowans had applauded Dean throughout the campaign for his ability to bring new energy and volunteers to the political process—and the Stormers, as we called them, seemed like a perfect example. People we'd polled had told us that they'd been impressed by the letters out-of-staters had written them about Dean. But now things seemed to be changing.

The Stormers ventured out into the bitter cold of that last weekend, wearing their trademark orange hats, and the Iowans politely said no, thank you. One can certainly speculate that we went deep into overkill. A woman in a focus group had told us that she was sick of being called again and again by Deaniacs; multiply her by thousands. One can also assume that Iowans, stubborn to the end, were tired of being told it "must" be Dean—whether by the news media or Al Gore or Tom Harkin or a bunch of kids in orange hats. Surely many voters had simply turned the wheel beyond Dean to somebody they considered a more solid possible President.

The entrance polls on caucus night were harsh and de-

would consist simply of the shouted words "South Carolina" ... "Arizona" ... "New Mexico" ... "Michigan," ending with The Scream.

A few weeks after Iowa, Dean went to Madison, Wisconsin, my home town, for a last-ditch effort in the Wisconsin primary. On the day he arrived, he was surprisingly upbeat, almost jovial—in part because his wife, Judy, accompanied him, and in part because he had returned to Vermont the night before to watch his son's high school hockey team win 5-0. I felt, though, that his mood stemmed more from his coming to terms with the extraordinary experience of his extraordinary campaign, despite its quick and brutal demise. As he left his final event to head to the airport, we spotted a kid with an orange hat. "Do you think it could be ...?" I wondered out loud—and sure enough, as the kid turned toward us we saw the words THE PERFECT STORM emblazoned on his hat.

I thought Dean might have the van stop so he could greet his supporter. But he just looked at him for a few seconds and then turned back to us and said, "They may have fucked up Iowa, but they sure changed America." We all laughed, particularly Dean himself, still happy from his day with Judy. But I immediately realized, as I think he did too, that he could just as easily have said "we" instead of "they." ■

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“KNIFED”

In 1968 the Kennedy family essentially blackballed a brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, who was very close to being chosen as Hubert Humphrey's running mate. In doing so, they may have accidentally thrown the election to Richard Nixon

BY SCOTT STOSSEL

.....

On November 5, 1968, Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey for the presidency of the United States by less than one percentage point of the popular vote (43.42 to 42.72)—slightly more than half a million of the 73 million votes cast nationwide. George Wallace, running as an independent, received 10 million votes, or 13.52 percent. But in the Electoral College, Humphrey's defeat was resounding. Nixon won thirty-two states, for 301 electoral votes, whereas Humphrey—the sitting Vice President—won only thirteen states (and the District of Columbia), for 191 electoral votes. Wallace, a race-baiting demagogue, won five states, for forty-six votes. Given these results, the election could be viewed as a repudiation of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Racial unrest, the riots of 1967 and 1968, the Vietnam War, the unfulfilled promise of the War on Poverty, and the chaos at the Democratic convention in Chicago in August—all this had combined to curdle much of the idealistic pro-Democratic sentiment that had until recently prevailed.

And yet it is not hard to imagine the 1968 election's having gone a different way. It is well known that events surrounding Vietnam (specifically, the likelihood that a peace settlement was imminent) had turned the tide in Humphrey's favor in the weeks before the election—and that the tide turned back at least in part because Republican operatives meddled unethically, trying to persuade the South Vietnamese government to pull back from negotiations with suggestions that a Nixon Administration would generate a more favorable settlement.

There was another factor as well—one that might have tilted the election to Humphrey in spite of the stalling of the Paris peace talks. It was the matter of Humphrey's vice-presidential selection.

In the spring of 1968 Sargent Shriver—the founding director of the Peace Corps, the head of Johnson's War on Poverty, and, as the husband of Eunice Kennedy, a brother-in-law of John, Robert, and Edward Kennedy—was appointed U.S. ambassador to France. His appointment was not without controversy in the upper reaches

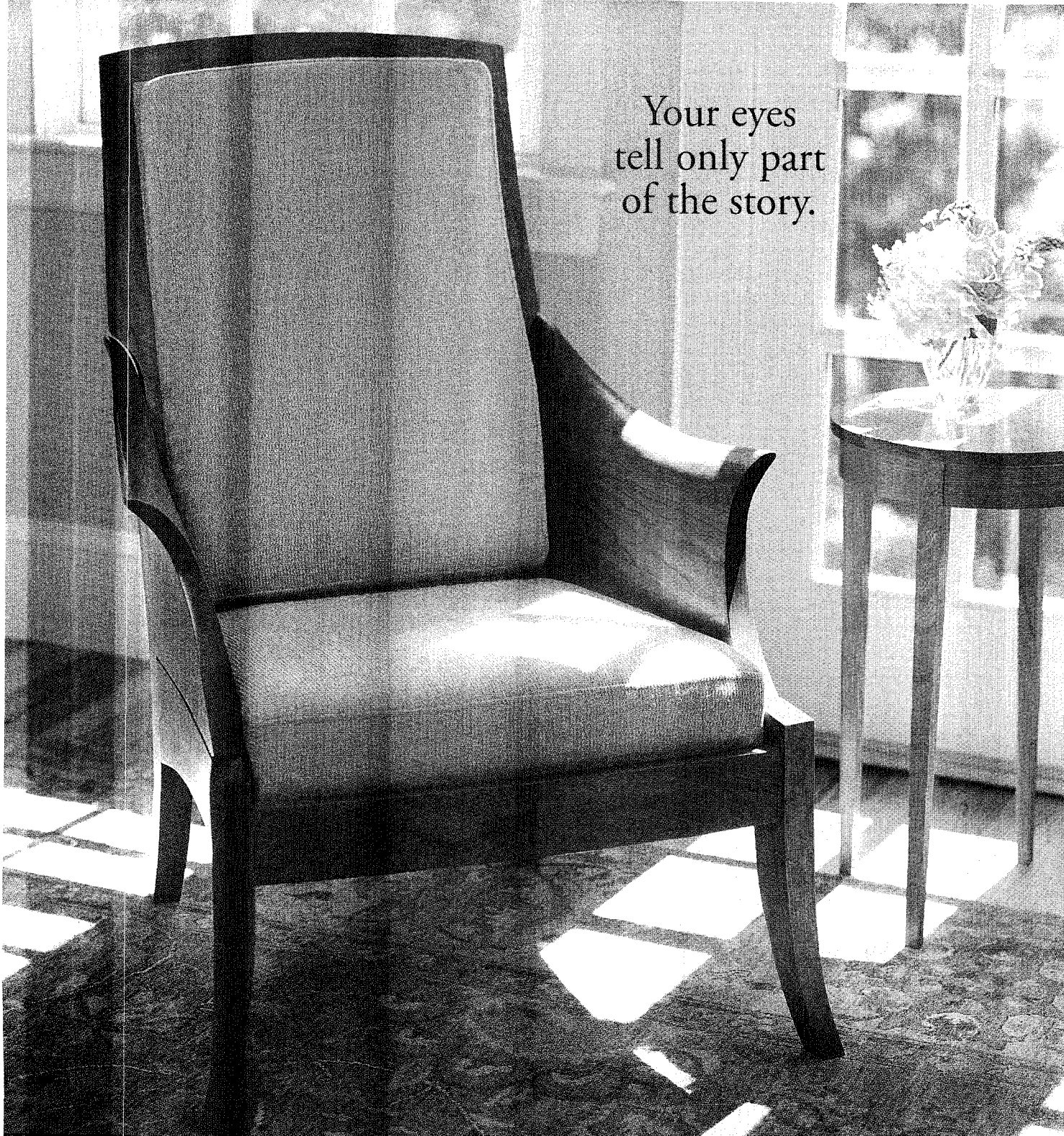
of the Democratic Party—and in his own extended family.

The problem was that during the fall of 1967 Bobby Kennedy had begun contemplating challenging Johnson for the Democratic nomination. Kennedy had been increasingly opposed to LBJ's handling of Vietnam, and he and Johnson had never had much use for each other; Kennedy had to stifle his distaste when his brother selected LBJ as his running mate in 1960. Even though their mutual dislike was no secret, for the most part the two had maintained an outward truce, and Kennedy had resisted seeking the nomination for fear of creating a damaging rift within the party. Late in 1967, however, Senator Eugene McCarthy, of Minnesota, began his own campaign; now RFK could not be held solely to blame for any rift.

In late January of 1968 the Tet Offensive destroyed any remaining credibility LBJ had with liberal Democrats and lost him the support of the American people generally. Johnson had been insisting for months that victory in Vietnam was nearly at hand; the penetration of 67,000 North Vietnamese and Vietcong deep into South Vietnam that winter suddenly made an American victory seem very distant, if not impossible. McCarthy's previously anemic campaign got a burst of energy as he became the repository of Democratic hopes for ending the war. Kennedy knew if he wanted to make a move, he had to do it soon.

The President had offered the ambassadorship to Shriver earlier that winter. So while Kennedy was considering whether to run against Johnson, Shriver was considering whether to go to Paris. Shriver monitored Kennedy's deliberations closely. It clearly bothered Kennedy that his brother-in-law had remained in the Johnson Administration long after many other former JFK aides and Cabinet members (including RFK himself) had left. But as long as the veneer of a truce existed between LBJ and RFK, Shriver could stay with impunity. If that truce were broken by Kennedy's entering the Democratic race, however, Shriver would be seen as sleeping with the enemy if

Scott Stossel is a senior editor of The Atlantic. This article is adapted from his book Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver, to be published this month by Smithsonian Books.



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he continued to serve the Administration in any capacity.

It was a no-win situation. Ever since John F. Kennedy's assassination, when Johnson had reached out to him in an effort to signal continuity with the Kennedy Administration, almost anything Shriver did (or didn't do) for Johnson had been fraught with symbolic weight. For good or ill, both sides saw him as The Kennedy in the Johnson Administration. Shriver had always supported the Kennedy family's political aspirations, but he was still working for Johnson, and he believed it was his patriotic duty to serve the President's interests. Meanwhile, although he remained unwaveringly devoted to the anti-poverty program, that wasn't enough for the President, who pressured him to accept the Paris appointment. As LBJ's adviser Joseph Califano observed in his book *The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (1991), the President "couldn't look at Shriver without trying to see whether Robert Kennedy was in the shadows behind his brother-in-law." It was bad enough, in Johnson's view, that Bobby Kennedy, who had once served as his Attorney General, was now threatening to run against him; he didn't want another member of the Kennedy family, one who was still working in his Administration, to join an opposing campaign. He wanted Shriver out of the country—and out of RFK's orbit.

In the second week of March, Shriver told Johnson he would accept the ambassadorship, pending the approval of the French government. Then he left with Eunice for a vacation in Spain. A few days later, on March 16, LBJ's fear was realized: Bobby Kennedy announced that he would seek the Democratic presidential nomination. On March 22 Secretary of State Dean Rusk called Shriver in Madrid seeking reassurance that Shriver still wished the President to submit his name to the Senate for confirmation; he and Johnson were worried that Kennedy's announcement might have caused Shriver to reconsider. But Shriver had made up his mind: he would go to Paris.

Although Shriver accepted the appointment without any malign intent, some of those close to RFK saw his decision as an insult to their candidate. What's more, Shriver, citing his diplomatic obligations, declined to work for the Kennedy campaign—even after Johnson withdrew from the race, on March 31. To some in the Kennedy circle, this was an unforgivable violation of the family code.

Nor was it his first. In early 1964 Johnson had leaked word to the press that Shriver topped his list of potential running mates for that year's election. LBJ believed that in making this known he could keep Bobby Kennedy off the ticket (there was considerable pressure to put him on it) and inoculate himself against attacks from Kennedy's wing of the party. But to Kennedy, for one of his in-laws to even contemplate joining LBJ's ticket constituted a betrayal. In late July of 1964 the former JFK aide Kenny O'Donnell was meeting with Johnson in the Oval Office when the voice of Bill Moyers, who had worked for Shriver at the Peace Corps and was now a top aide to LBJ, came over the

intercom on the President's desk. Moyers reported that Shriver would be willing to join the ticket, and that Bobby Kennedy would not object. "The hell he wouldn't!" O'Donnell exclaimed. Not long after this incident, according to a *New York Times* report some years later, "Robert Kennedy sat in icy silence aboard the Kennedy plane on the way to Hyannis Port deliberately ostracizing his brother-in-law."

In the event, Shriver went to Paris in May and played no role in Kennedy's campaign. Eunice campaigned hard for her brother while standing resolutely by her husband's decision. Her campaigning put her husband in an awkward position—after all, he was still working for Johnson and his Vice President, Humphrey, who had entered the race in April. However, her support did not placate RFK's aides, who remained furious with Shriver.

Then, tragically, everything changed. A few minutes after midnight on June 5, 1968, moments after he had given a speech in the ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, celebrating his victory over Eugene McCarthy in the California primary, Bobby Kennedy was shot. He died in the hospital the next day. LBJ sent Air Force One to transport Kennedy's body to New York, and the Shrivets flew to La Guardia to join family members and Kennedy's aides. When Shriver tried to help unload the casket from the plane, some of the aides pushed him away, bitter in their grief.

Kennedy's former advisers soon dispersed to the campaigns of the remaining candidates for the Democratic nomination, among whom the two leading contenders were now McCarthy and Humphrey. But the "Kennedy movement," as the journalist Theodore White called it, longed for Ted Kennedy to enter the race, or at least to make himself available as a running mate. The American people, especially Democrats, craved a Kennedy on the 1968 ticket. If Ted was not going to step forward, however, the order of succession—which had previously run from Joe Jr. to Jack to Bobby to Ted—was no longer clear. For Kennedy supporters outside Bobby's inner circle, the next best alternative was Shriver: a Kennedy in-law who shared RFK's commitment to social programs and who had something of JFK's dash and style. By the third week in June newspapers were reporting that Shriver was one of Humphrey's top choices for a running mate. On June 21 Humphrey told reporters that he was "very interested" in allying himself with Shriver.

A Shriver nomination would be politically tricky, because no one knew exactly what the Kennedys wanted and whether or not they would approve. Nevertheless, the first signs were positive. Bill Moyers, who had left the Johnson Administration in 1967 and was now the publisher of *Newsday*, wrote to Shriver on June 27, 1968.

I had a long and private meeting Tuesday with Fred Dutton [a former aide to JFK who had remained close to the Kennedy family] and asked him how the hardcore Kennedy people would react to you as Vice President. I went over the



Sargent Shriver and Lyndon Johnson, 1965

reasons why your selection would be good for Humphrey and the country, hitting hard on the symbolic meaning it would have for the young, the poor, and the black. He thought this made sense, and expressed the belief that the idea would be accepted by most of the people around Kennedy, himself (Dutton) included.

In mid-July, Bill Josephson, the former general counsel of the Peace Corps, met discreetly on Shriver's behalf with Max Kampelman, one of Humphrey's close advisers. As Josephson later reported to Shriver, Kampelman said that Humphrey "definitely" wanted Shriver in any Humphrey Administration and then brought up the subject of the vice-presidency. Presumably, however, the Kennedys would have to give their blessing before Humphrey made any official move.

On July 17 Don Petrie, a well-connected business executive and a longtime friend of Shriver's, sent word to Paris that the Shriver-for-VP trial balloons sent up by the Humphrey camp through leaks to the press had produced "generally favorable comment." Everyone, however, was waiting for Ted. The Kennedy movement was waiting for Ted to say that he would seek the Democratic presidential nomination. The Humphrey campaign was waiting to see whether Ted would be available for the vice-presidency. Shriver and company were waiting to see whether Ted would support Shriver for the vice-presidency.

For the moment Ted wasn't saying anything. But Petrie had told Shriver about a conversation that one of his colleagues had had with Shriver's brother-in-law Steve Smith

(the husband of Jean Kennedy, Eunice and Ted's sister), in which Smith had said that although it was obvious that Ted Kennedy could win the nomination, he didn't want it. Nor did he want to be Humphrey's running mate. So who did Smith think Humphrey would pick? "It looks like Sarge," Smith responded. "But the family resents it."

Finally, in late July, Ted announced that he would not seek or accept the presidential or vice-presidential nomination. On August 9 Josephson, Shriver's emissary, met again with Kampelman. Kampelman got right to the point: "Let's talk turkey about Shriver." He told Josephson that if Humphrey were to select Shriver, several issues would need to be addressed. One of them was that the selection "would alienate the Kennedy family and their surrounding politicians." Josephson replied that Humphrey needed to identify someone "who speaks authoritatively for the Kennedy family" and get "a reliable report of what he or she says." He told Kampelman that "if, for example, Rose Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy, or Ethel Kennedy were asked," he was "reasonably sure that they would be strongly positive about Sarge's candidacy." On the other hand, "if Steve Smith were asked, he would be negative."

At this, as Josephson recorded in his notes immediately following the meeting, "Max's eyebrows shot up." Kampelman said that "Steve was negative toward Sarge and that Steve and the Vice President had dined together recently." Kenny O'Donnell, Kampelman agreed, was "also knocking Sarge." Humphrey was influenced by these opinions, Kampelman said, because he saw the importance of "not

losing the enthusiasm and competence of the Kennedy supporters nationwide.”

Josephson suggested that “probably Ted Kennedy was the only person who could and would speak authoritatively for the family.” Kampelman agreed that Ted’s views would carry great weight, not only with Humphrey but also with those party leaders—for example, the mayor of Chicago, Richard Daley—who refused to give up on the idea of Ted as Vice President. But Kennedy proved elusive. He agreed to make a discreet side trip to Paris to meet with Shriver during a European vacation the second week of August, but he never showed up.

On August 20 Moyers sent Humphrey a memo that he had written with Josephson and other Shriver supporters. The memo made a strong case for Shriver, and finessed the question of his being a “Kennedy candidate” without the support of certain Kennedy people.

Shriver would appeal to the young, the memo argued, because as the creator of the Peace Corps, Head Start, and other programs he had become “the personal symbol for the idealism those programs inspired.” In the spring of 1968 Shriver, alone among LBJ’s high-ranking officials, could appear on college campuses without being picketed. Shriver

that if Steve Smith was the source of negative comments about Shriver, he would “slow him down or shut him up.” Shriver now realized, however, that there was a fundamental problem: “those who had staked most of their personal hopes on RFK are extremely frustrated—and the prospect of anyone ‘in the family’ who didn’t impale him—or herself—on a picket fence without regard to the consequences—suddenly being in a position to pick up all the marbles—that prospect is galling!” Shriver concluded his letter with uncharacteristic bile: “Clearly ... the same clique who opposed [the Peace Corps] as an independent agency—the same palace guard (now without a palace) (or a pretender) find it hard to accept the prospect of a prodigal in-law (let alone son) sitting down to their feast.”

“All I asked Teddie was for neutrality,” Shriver wrote.

I said frankly I had never asked him or Steve or anyone else in the family for anything—which is true—Now all I suggested was that it brought no credit to anyone for Steve or others to attack me. I can’t report that Teddie explicitly stated he would be neutral—My belief is this: He will try to be neutral ... but his neutrality would be neutrality for [Maine Senator Edmund] Muskie or [South Dakota Senator George] McGovern or [Maryland Senator] Joe Tydings and neutrality against [Oklahoma Senator] Fred Harris or me.

The former JFK aide Kenny O’Donnell made clear to Humphrey during the convention that the Kennedy family would consider it an “unfriendly act” if he were to select Shriver as his running mate.

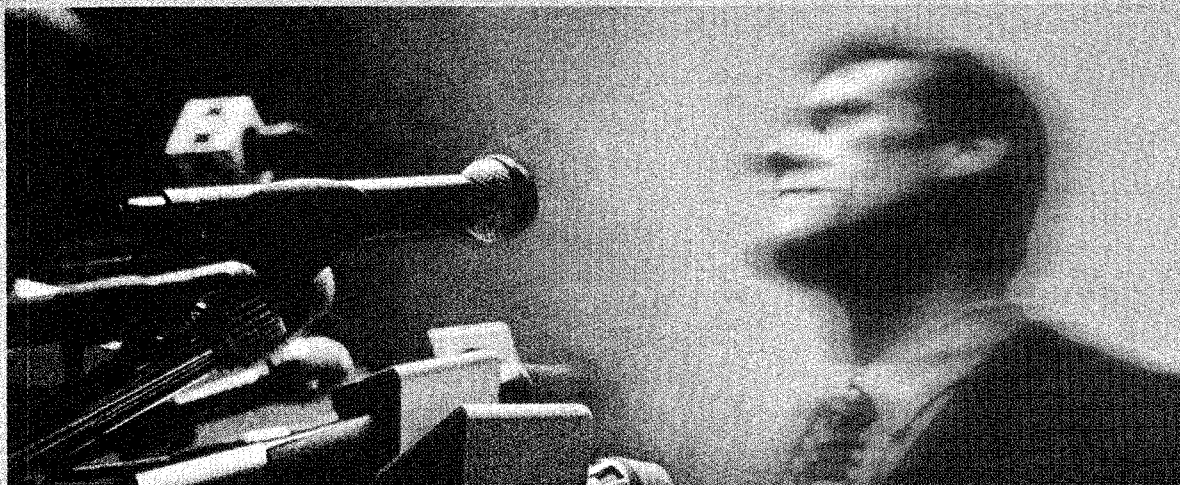
could also reach out to black voters: two years earlier he had ridden past 10,000 spectators through the riot-scarred streets of Watts, in Los Angeles, in a car on which his hosts had written “Sargent Shriver—The Man Who Has Done the Most for the Negro.” Shriver was a proven administrator, a forceful campaigner, and a nationally known figure—and he had not been “a casualty of the Vietnam war.” The memo stated, “As a member of the Administration he could not and did not denounce the war, but he appeals to critics of the war because he has been totally involved in the two Kennedy-Johnson programs most remote from and opposite to the war: The Peace Corps and the Economic Opportunity Programs.” Finally, Shriver got along well with Humphrey, and as the “prototype of the modern American Catholic,” he could help win the crucial blue-collar ethnic vote.

Around the same time, Ted Kennedy weighed in. He talked to Shriver by phone in France for about half an hour. On the question of whether the family would support Shriver on the Humphrey ticket, Kennedy was ultimately inconclusive. But the substance of the conversation, as Shriver described it the next day in a letter to one of his closest friends, was revealing. Shriver wrote, “Many K[ennedy] boosters really are sore at me—even bitter—because I didn’t help more [on RFK’s campaign].” Ted agreed to “keep in close touch” with Shriver through the convention and said

Humphrey was evidently convinced that Shriver had all the qualifications he was seeking in a running mate; Max Kampelman recalled in a memoir, “Hubert was very fond of Sarge, whose genial and charming exterior hid a strong sense of principle, personal integrity, and stubborn independence.” But he felt he could not choose him without the Kennedy family’s unequivocal blessing. Still, a few days before the convention began, Fred Harris told Moyers that Humphrey had narrowed the list to Shriver and himself.

The convention opened on Monday, August 26. By Wednesday morning it looked as though Humphrey had the nomination sewn up. That afternoon delegates heatedly debated Vietnam; that evening violence erupted on the streets outside. War protesters, civil-rights activists, and college students of various persuasions had descended on the city at the start of the convention. That day they whipped themselves into an almost insurrectionist frenzy, and were then brutalized by National Guardsmen and the Chicago police, acting under Mayor Daley’s direction. At 8:05 on Wednesday night Theodore White jotted this sentence in his notebook: “The Democrats are finished.” Just under four hours later Humphrey was officially nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate.

Over breakfast with Humphrey on Wednesday morning, Daley—having finally accepted that Kennedy would not run for



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Vice President—had strongly urged him to pick Shriver. The *Chicago Daily News* that day enthusiastically trumpeted Shriver's qualifications. In Paris, Shriver had been meeting with Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance, LBJ's leading negotiators in the Paris peace talks, to discuss what sort of peace plan he would urge on Humphrey if offered a place on the ticket. He began thinking about how, if nominated, he would proffer an olive branch to the peace movement generally, and to the protesters who had been beaten and jailed in Chicago in particular.

But late Wednesday night, as Harris Wofford, who had worked for JFK in the White House and for Shriver at the Peace Corps, recorded in a memoir, Senator Walter Mondale, of Minnesota, called him from Humphrey's suite to say that "Kennedy family opposition to Shriver's nomination was weighing heavily against his selection." (Wofford suspected that Kenny O'Donnell was speaking in the family name, "perhaps without prior authority." Indeed, as Kampelman later recalled, O'Donnell made clear to Humphrey during the convention that "the family would consider it an unfriendly act" if he were to select Shriver.) Wofford told Mondale that this "former Palace Guard" had "no monopoly on the Kennedy legacy." Besides, he asked, did Mondale really think that a man as decent as Ted Kennedy would

people let Shriver's people know that the choice for VP was down to Harris and Muskie. (Ultimately Humphrey chose Muskie.) "We needed the good will of the Kennedys more than we needed Sarge," one of Humphrey's advisers said at the time. "His name was effectively vetoed."

Would Shriver's presence on the ticket have changed the outcome of the election? First, consider that Humphrey lost Illinois by only 135,000 votes out of 4.6 million cast. With Shriver, who could claim to be a native son (he had lived there for fifteen years, during which time he had been a significant political force), Humphrey would most likely have won that state's twenty-six electoral votes, instantly narrowing the electoral-vote count to 275–217. Second, consider that many of the Catholic and ethnic voters who had been so crucial to the Democrats' victory in 1960 switched their allegiance to Nixon in 1968. As one of the nation's most prominent lay Catholics, Shriver would most likely have fared better than Muskie among Catholic voters. More votes from Catholics in, say, Wisconsin (which Humphrey lost by 61,000 votes out of 1.7 million) and Ohio (which he lost by 90,000 votes out of 4 million) could have given the Democrats those states, which had twelve and

Referring to certain Kennedy insiders, Shriver wrote, "The same palace guard (now without a palace) (or a pretender) find it hard to accept the prospect of a prodigal in-law . . . sitting down to their feast."

impede the electoral aspirations of his own brother-in-law?

In fact, it seems, Kennedy already had. Earlier in the day, according to Humphrey's aides, he had called Humphrey and promised his support. But notes Josephson took on a conversation with Kampelman that September make clear that the support did not extend to Shriver. According to the notes, which I obtained from Josephson recently, Kampelman recalled Humphrey's exact words after getting off the phone with Kennedy: "I sensed Teddy was not adamant [in his opposition to Shriver], but led [me] to believe better not."

Reflecting on these events nearly forty years later, Ted Kennedy acknowledges having been disappointed at Shriver's decision not to participate in RFK's campaign. But he insists that he did not veto Shriver's nomination for Vice President. He says that he does not clearly recollect the telephone conversation with Humphrey about Shriver, but that he will never forget how he felt at the time. His brother Bobby's death had been devastating to him; he was in a state of physical and emotional exhaustion. Having had two brothers assassinated while campaigning, Ted wanted to get as far away from politics as possible until his wounds could heal. His distress and his desire to retreat from politics, Kennedy believes, account for any negative vibrations Humphrey may have received when they spoke.

Whatever Ted intended, on Thursday morning Humphrey's

twenty-six electoral votes respectively. A win in any two of those three states, or in some combination of several closely contested others, would have thrown the election into the House of Representatives, a heavily Democratic body where Humphrey would easily have prevailed.

In addition, by far the most pressing issue on most voters' minds was Vietnam. If Shriver had been on the ticket and had carried through with his plan to press for a negotiated peace—a plan concocted with the help of Harriman and Vance, the negotiators themselves—who knows how many additional votes might have gone Humphrey's way?

Most important, Humphrey had wanted Shriver on the ticket for largely the same reason he had wanted Ted Kennedy: after the deaths of JFK and RFK, many Americans were hungry for another Kennedy—as a reminder of what the New Frontier had been like before hope and optimism had withered. With Ted declining to run and various members of the Kennedy circle apparently opposed to Shriver, Humphrey had to do without the help of the Kennedy mystique. How many votes would that mystique have been worth?

Two years after the 1968 convention Max Kampelman had lunch with Shriver in Washington. As Kampelman recorded in a letter soon afterward, "We . . . talked about 1968 and Chicago. I again made it clear to [Shriver] that he was knifed and I believe he knows that. I believe he also knows who did it." ▀

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KATHLEEN TOOMEY JABS
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ERIC KAMAL HILGENDORF
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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WESTERN STATE COLLEGE
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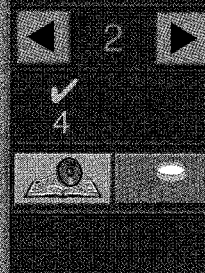


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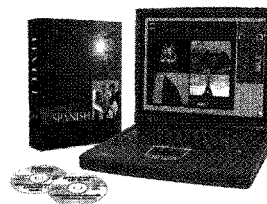
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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

Poor Old Willie

"If he put his genius into his life and property rather than his work," Christopher Hitchens writes in a review of Jeffrey Meyers's Somerset Maugham: A Life, "it was because the former were apter repositories for such talent as he possessed."

PAGE 118

Hoosiers

In Seventeen, Booth Tarkington "unwittingly created a kind of freeze-dried pornography, ready to expand when dipped into the moist knowingness of an age he could hardly envision." Thomas Mallon considers a nearly forgotten writer and his lost world.

PAGE 123

Neat Structure, Grand Notions

Faith Fox, by Jane Gardam, reviewed by Christina Schwarz

PAGE 137

Gender-Neutral

The Whole Story and Other Stories, by Ali Smith, reviewed by Brooke Allen

PAGE 137

"Martini-Age Victorian"

An appreciation of John Marquand—whose Pulitzer Prize-winning The Late George Apley (1937) has just been reissued—

by Martha Spaulding

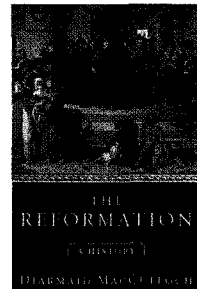
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NEW & NOTEWORTHY*What to read this month*

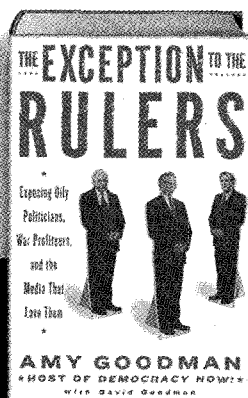
BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

The theological, doctrinal, political, and social revolutions that convulsed Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave rise both to a jumble of national and territorial churches independent of Rome and to a vital, often creative, and at times virulent Counter-Reformation within the Catholic Church. This process also engendered the bloodiest war and the ghastliest massacres that the Continent would see until the twentieth century. MacCulloch has taken on this vast subject and produced one of the most magisterial and stylishly written historical works to be published in a decade. The book sparkingly synthesizes scholarship on an astonishing array of subjects, ranging from repentance rituals in Protestant Transylvania to the Jesuits' reactions to what they saw as the "Judaizing deviations" of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to church architecture. Throughout, MacCulloch, professor of the history of the Church at Oxford, explicates complex theological issues with startling lucidity. And his analyses of the lives, personalities, ideas, and struggles of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Cranmer, Philip II, and Ignatius of Loyola are at once sharp and profound (and not infrequently funny). Yet this is far more than an intellectual or institutional history. The Reformation is the great and sanguinary fault line in Europe's history, in part because the divides within Western Christendom soon came to express themselves in the chronic rivalries and dynastic clashes among Europe's states (during the Thirty Years' War as much as 40 percent of the population of the German lands suffered an early death because of the fighting or the concomitant famine and disease), and MacCulloch treats that tricky and often lethal interplay of religion and politics with nuance and care. Although he attends to high politics and theological disputes, his book is also a sophisticated work of social history, focusing on the ways these two centuries of turbulent change affected the daily lives of ordinary people—specifically in popular attitudes toward death, childhood, sexuality, marriage, and the family. MacCulloch's supreme achievement, though, is his appreciation of the foreignness of his subject. The Reformation was a febrile time, in which Europeans, he reminds us, "were prepared to burn and torture each other because they disagreed on whether, or how, bread and wine were transformed into God." In the face of this alien, and to



THE REFORMATION
by Diarmaid
MacCulloch
Viking



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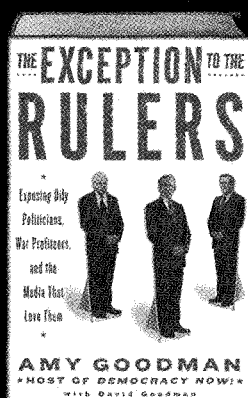
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Amy Goodman is the host of *Democracy Now!*, which airs on over 210 radio and television stations.

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most of his readers absurd, world MacCulloch never exercises what he calls "the condescension of posterity." Rather, he fulfills the most difficult task of the historian: he allows us to understand the past on its own terms, and in so doing he makes us (modern, largely secular readers) see why these were in fact urgent issues to those who killed and were killed over them. This is a lasting work.

THE WAR FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, by Richard M. Gamble (ISI Books). Before the United States entered and while it was fighting the First World War, intellectuals and religious leaders in this country were divided between those who embraced the idea of the United States as a messianic crusader and held that this was a "war to end all wars," since an American victory would help realize the kingdom of God, and those who opposed the war, especially when it was rationalized as a holy crusade. But many readers today would probably be surprised that liberals and progressive Christian leaders were the ones who adhered to the former position; conservatives and fundamentalists adhered to the latter. In this careful and incisive work of intellectual history Gamble dissects the origins and first flowering of liberal internationalism, and the relationship between it and progressive, social-gospel Christianity (George Marsden, in his *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, explored the antiwar position of the fundamentalists, a stand that provoked liberal Protestants to excoriate them as unpatriotic and even subversive). It's a story of a largely self-righteous and unlovely dogma, and implicit in Gamble's story is the idea that this liberalism—in positing that America will be safe only when the rest of the world is converted to American ideals—is an inherently expansionist ideology. (Gamble is scrupulously historical, uninterested in the contemporary implications of his analysis, but those who are so inclined can trace a fairly direct line from liberal interventionists' moralistic cries for an American empire during the Great War to JFK's stirring but rather dangerous notion that in the struggle against communism the United States would "pay

any price, bear any burden" to the messianic utterances of George W. Bush, which today's liberals love to scorn, though they're remarkably similar to Bill Clinton's.) Gamble's book, along with the opening section of the second volume of Bruce Cumings's *Origins of the Korean War*, is essential reading for those wishing to understand the rise and consolidation of liberal internationalism as America's foreign-policy creed—one embraced across administrations since the late 1940s, by liberals and conservatives alike.

NEW GRUB STREET, by George Gissing (Modern Library). With characteristic perversity, Orwell wrote that England had "produced very few better novelists" than George Gissing. Publication of this new, usefully annotated edition of Gissing's masterpiece roughly coincided with the centenary of his death, last year. This portrait of toilers in late-nineteenth-century London's literary world depicts abject professional, personal, and marital disappointment—and the rise of one (in many ways appealing) man who maneuvers to snatch the glittering prizes. Very few novels paint so unsparing yet subtle a picture of the selfishness of most human motivation; and though this intricate, perfectly plotted story is unrelievedly grim (the earnest, the decent, and the kind are all utterly defeated and broken up by life, and success, as we're offhandedly reminded by the one successful character, "has nothing whatever to do with moral deserts"), it's also—unbelievably—ceaselessly absorbing, ironic, and often extremely (if truly darkly) funny. It's the greatest novel in English about failure—about men "capable of better things than they had done or would ever do"; Orwell's own *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying* is a pale reflection. We're devoting the Books section this month to considerations of writers—Somerset Maugham, Booth Tarkington, John Marquand—whose works, like Gissing's, have for various reasons failed to earn the designation "classic." None aspired to write for the ages, but all, we think, warrant a fresh appraisal. **A**

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of *The Atlantic*.

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POOR OLD WILLIE

The life of W. Somerset Maugham was a good deal more "exquisite, dramatic, torrid, and tragic"—especially in his splendid Mediterranean exile—than any of his works

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

Here is the opening sentence of Anthony Burgess's *Earthly Powers* (1980)—incidentally, one of the most underrated English novels of the past century: "It was the afternoon of my eighty-first birthday, and I was in bed with my catamite when Ali announced that the archbishop had come to see me."

One knows at once who is the object of this pastiche. One knows it before "Geoffrey," described tersely as "my Ganymede or male lover as well as my secretary," is further described as responding to the intrusion by "pulling on his overtight summer slacks."

Yet one is tempted to continue quoting, about the Mediterranean villa and the goings-on there ("I lay a little while, naked, mottled, sallow, emaciated, smoking a cigarette that should have been postcoital but was not"). This is quite simply because the parody is so much better than anything that W. Somerset Maugham ever wrote himself. Poor old "Willie" was more given to openings like this: "I have never begun a novel with more misgiving. If I call it a novel it is only because I don't know what else to call it."

Thus the deadly kickoff to *The Razor's Edge*, a story that furthermore turns out to be narrated by someone named Maugham. There was a time when many readers thought this kind of thing to be profound, and quite the cat's meow when it came to the delineation of searing human emotion. Even at that time, however, one shrewd writer—and also near-perfect pasticheur—saw through it without too much difficulty. "How about old S. Maugham, do you think?" P. G. Wodehouse wrote to Evelyn Waugh.

I've been re-reading a lot of his stuff, and I'm wondering a bit about him. I mean, surely one simply can't do that stuff about the district officer hearing there's a white man dying in

a Chinese slum and it turns out that it's gay lighthearted Jack Almond, who disappeared and no-one knew what had become of [him] and he went right under, poor chap, because a woman in England had let him down.

Well, it turned out that one simply could do that stuff, and go on doing it. Sometimes, for the sake of variety, it's the white woman who goes right under, or who succumbs in other ways to the lush madness of the tropics. Such is the case in "Before the Party," "P&O," and "The Force of Circumstance," though

SOMERSET
MAUGHAM: A LIFE
by Jeffrey Meyers
Knopf

with females there is usually the redemptive possibility of a return by steamship to dear old England. The best of the sweltering colonial stories, which I can remember re-reading for the sake of atmosphere in a Malayan hotel once patronized by Maugham, is "The Outstation." Here we meet Warburton, a solitary middle-aged Englishman who is the resident administrator of a jungly area somewhere in the Malay archipelago. Rigid in respect of the upper lip, he sticks to a stern routine of exercises and always dresses in formal attire for dinner. His copy of the *London Times* arrives by sea mail six weeks late, and sometimes several successive days' editions are delivered by the same post, but he disciplines himself to open them one at a time, in strict order. The greatest test of this practice comes during the far-away Battle of the Somme, when by opening some later editions he could easily discover the outcome. But Warburton forces himself to keep his nerve, and breaks the wrappers seriatim. The effect is that of Conrad in tweeds. Maugham's overall debt to Conrad is so evident that one usually finishes by putting him down and picking up the real thing.

Just as he was a character in one of his best-known novels, so Maugham worked assiduously to create a persona

for himself in life. And the life was, according to this admirable biography, a good deal more exquisite, dramatic, torrid, and tragic than any of the works. Born and brought up in France, Maugham lost his parents when quite young and from then on was farmed out to mean relatives and cruel, monastic boarding schools. The traditional ration of bullying, beating, and buggery seems to have been unusually effective in his case, leaving him with a frightful lifelong speech impediment and a staunch commitment to homosexuality. (Ashenden—the name of his secret-agent character, was also the name of a comely youth at the King's School in Canterbury, where Maugham served his term, so to speak.)

An ideal way to "lock in" homosexual disposition is probably to spend time as a gynecologist in a slum district of London—which, astonishingly enough, is what the fastidious young man did. Though he would ultimately abandon medicine, he passed considerable time delivering babies in the abysmal squalor of Lambeth, on the south bank of the River Thames. As part of his training he witnessed cesarean births in the hospital, where death was not uncommon. The experience gave him the raw material for *Liza of Lambeth*, his first novel, and also made him surprisingly radical in his infrequently expressed political views, which were strongly sympathetic to the Labour Party's social-welfare proposals. The arbitrariness of death and suffering, moreover, persuaded him that religious belief was merely fatuous.

Throughout Jeffrey Meyers's book one is reminded of the remarkable difference made to English letters by the Victorian-era law that prohibited homosexual conduct. Maugham was a young man during the Oscar Wilde scandal, and he developed all the habits of subterfuge that were necessary to his survival. It seems certain that he married Syrie Wellcome partly as "cover," and thereby doomed himself to decades of misery and litigation. But Meyers allows us to speculate that he did this, and also embarked on a dismal exercise in fatherhood, in order to satisfy himself as a writer that he had done everything at least once. (My contribution to the gay-marriage debate would be this: remem-



ber what vast unhappiness was generated in the days when homosexuals felt obliged to marry heterosexuals.) Syrie was a greedy and impossible bitch to begin with, and did not improve upon intimate acquaintance, or want of acquaintance, of that kind. If one scans the few and cringe-making attempts to describe man-woman sex in Maugham's fiction, or if one attempts to infer anything of his conjugal relations, one is forced to picture him screwing his courage to the sticking place (or perhaps vice versa).

One of the many great appeals of war for men is that it allows and legitimizes flight from domestic entrapment. The year 1914—his own fortieth year—afforded Maugham just this chance of deliverance. He spoke French perfectly and he had a medical qualification, and before his only child, Elisabeth (naturally called "Liza" for most of her life), was born he had volunteered for the Western Front. The work of an ambulance man in wartime was the perfect counterpoint to gynecology—and has a vivid connection to gay iconography, as we know from the poetry of Walt Whitman and also the work of Wilfred Owen and Yukio Mishima. It's not by coincidence that the pierced and bleeding nudity of Saint Sebastian (whose name is shared by Waugh's epicene hero in *Brideshead Revisited*, with the addition of "Flyte" to suggest arrows) is the supreme symbol here. Not long after his arrival in the trenches Maugham met a dashing young American named Gerald Haxton, and never slept with a woman again. He had found the great entanglement of his life, and though Haxton was every bit as bitchy and greedy as Syrie, and exhibited many other vices as well, he seems never—or at any rate seldom—to have been boring. For the next several decades it was part of Maugham's job to look after the person whom he'd ostensibly hired to look after him, and to keep him out of jail.

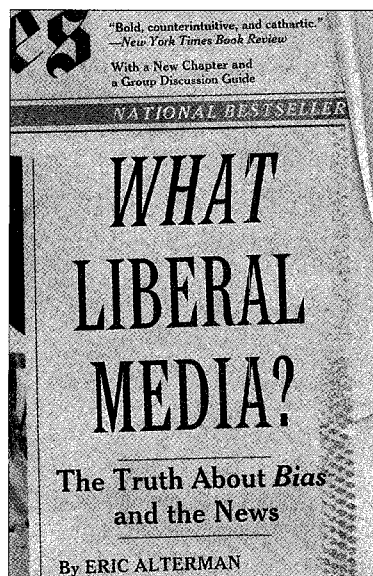
The succeeding interlude in Maugham's life was also ready-made for his purposes as a popular novelist. He was recruited by British intelligence. For some reason they wanted to send him to Western Samoa, which had been German-occupied until 1914. This was his introduction to the Pacific. In a subsequent letter unearthed by Meyers, Maugham

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explained his long connection with the region thus:

The exotic background was forced upon me accidentally by the fact that during the war I was employed in the Intelligence department, and so visited parts of the world which otherwise I might not have summoned up sufficient resolution to go to.

Note the slight clumsiness, which seems to have inflected everything Maugham ever wrote. Out of this episode, however, came *The Moon and Sixpence*, a rather prettily done fictionalization of that other great refugee from domesticity, Paul Gauguin.

The ludicrous failures of British and American intelligence during the Russian Revolution, retold many times through the biographies of Bruce Lockhart and Sidney Reilly, can be encapsulated in the single fact that in mid-1917

enough in itself to negate the British aim of staving off revolution while continuing to insist on Russian participation in the war. It did not, to his credit, take Maugham very long to see that his task was an impossible one. He gave an account of a meeting with Kerensky, the preferred British candidate, that confirms the opinion later expressed in my hearing by Isaiah Berlin—that Kerensky was "one of the great wets of history."

A latent connection has often been supposed to exist between homosexuality and espionage. This seems to "work" in the cases of Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess, but it emphatically does not explain the (rather superior) performances of Kim Philby and Graham Greene. Elements of secrecy and disguise and "code" may be innate in the gay makeup, but they didn't confer any advantage on Maugham when he was confronted with

**Maugham's difficulty was not just a tinge of self-hatred
but a real inability to see literary "genius" when he
encountered it. And this was not merely a question of his
particular repression or guilt. He just got things wrong.**

Somerset Maugham was dispatched from the Pacific to Saint Petersburg as chief agent. He had never visited the country before and had only a nodding acquaintance with the language. He made the trip by railway across Siberia, and in the preface to *Ashenden* he wrote about it in this manner:

I felt the lonely steppes and the interminable forests; the flow of the broad Russian rivers and all the toil of the countryside; the ploughing of the land and the reaping of the ripe wheat; the sighing of the wind in the birch trees; the long months of dark winter; and then the dancing of the women in the villages and the youths bathing in shallow streams on summer evenings.

Only the haunting strings of the balalaika, the warm scent of the samovar, and the glimpse of an onion dome would be required to make this the perfect summary of all clichés about Russia. Moreover, the ploughing and reaping bit was presumably "felt" secondhand, since the salient fact of the moment was that there was no bread. Indeed, the Bolshevik slogan "Peace, Bread, and Land" was

Lenin and Trotsky. It was simply a matter of drawing realistic conclusions, which he generally did. In any case, by that time he was leading enough of a double life already. And, as for so many of the homo duplex English literary queens of that epoch, the solution was—abroad.

Maugham's splendid exile at the Villa Mauresque, on the coast between Nice and Monte Carlo, was the centerpiece of his reputation as well as the answer to his problems. No longer would he have to fear the deportation of Gerald Haxton, who as an American was constantly running that risk in his trawlings through the bars of London. France was Maugham's birthplace, and the British tax inspectors couldn't follow him there either. He could shelter his growing literary income and his private life at the same time. The villa had been built by the odious King Leopold II of Belgium, as a place to house his personal confessor. (Not even Anthony Burgess could have made that up.) It had a Moorish style, as the name implies, with some fake-

Renaissance appurtenances, but Maugham removed the vulgar cupola, built a library, and began to assemble a collection of Oriental art and classical painting.

Comparable, I suppose, to Harold Acton's celebrated retreat in Florence, and visited by critics such as Kenneth Clark and Raymond Mortimer, the villa managed to be at once a museum and a discreet place of resort for what was later to be called the Homintern. That aspect to one side, every page of description seems to contain a useful hint for one's own retirement: the Bernini fountain, for instance, and the specially planted avocado trees, with a skilled resident cook to transform the luscious green fruit into an ice cream flavored with rum. (This contrasts with the rebarbative lobster ice cream served by Ribbentrop at a dinner recorded in *"Chips": The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*.) Quentin Crisp was entranced, and summed up Maugham as one of "the stately homos of England." Christopher Isherwood and Don Bachardy were slightly aghast when the tireless staff unpacked and laid out all their belongings, including the tubes of lubricant and the powder for warding off crab lice. Edna St. Vincent Millay, making a stop at the villa at a time when Noël Coward and Cecil Beaton were of the party, exclaimed loudly, "Oh Mr. Maugham, it's fairy land here!" ... Noël and Cecil were just a bit taken aback." This is all quite good fun (Maugham to Emerald Cunard, excusing himself for leaving early: "I have to keep my youth." Cunard to Maugham: "Then why didn't you bring him with you?"), but it does begin to pall after a bit, as it must have done in fact.

Things were not all brittle and wity and artistic, in any case. The Villa Mauresque exerted a magnetic force on spongers and toadies and climbers of all sorts, and poor Maugham was always finding his bookshelves and wine cellar and bric-a-brac subjected to shameless pilfering. Gerald Haxton, caught between the twin local lures of the Monte Carlo casinos and the waterfront full of sailors, became mad, bad, and dangerous to know. Through it all, and even through the Second World War, which saw him expelled from Cap Ferrat, and during a long and more respectably senescent friendship with his contemporary Win-

ston Churchill, Maugham kept to a rigorous regime at his desk, and turned out third-rate prose by the yard, or the furlong. If he put his genius into his life and property rather than his work, it was because the former were apter repositories for such talent as he possessed.

The main contradiction seems to be this: Maugham was gay, all right (he probably exaggerated when he said that he was one-quarter "normal"), but he wasn't especially pleased about the fact. Pursuing a pet artistic theory of his, that the paintings of El Greco were revelations of the aesthetic of a repressed homosexual, he chose to phrase it like this:

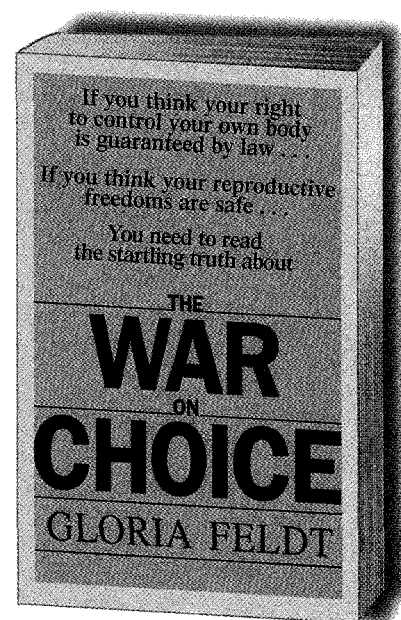
It cannot be denied that the homosexual has a narrower outlook on the world than the normal man. In certain respects the natural responses of the species are denied him. Some at least of the broad and typical emotions he can never experience ... A distinctive trait of the homosexual is a lack of deep seriousness over certain things that normal men take seriously. This ranges from an inane flippancy to a sardonic humour.

Deciding that "the homosexual can never reach the supreme heights of genius," as Maugham did, may be slightly preferable to the tiresome insistence of some gays that all great artists have been members of the club. However, if one merely keeps the name W. H. Auden in mind while reading the above passage, one sees that Maugham's difficulty was not just a tinge of self-hatred but a real inability to see literary "genius" when he encountered it. (Though Auden, by the way, rather liked his stuff.) And this was not merely a question of his particular repression or guilt. He just got things wrong. One could hardly classify Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* as a gay novel, even subliminally, yet when it was published Maugham wrote a review praising Amis for his outright attack on the young barbarians ("they are scum") who were then threatening English campuses with their beery, plebeian subversiveness. As a satire on the "Angry Young Men" this would have been delicious (and in the long run rather prescient), but it became painfully apparent that Maugham was being entirely and pedantically literal.

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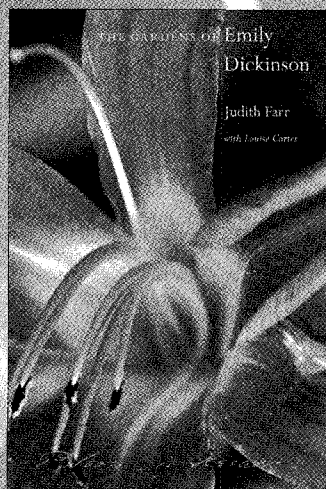
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pleton, in lieu of characterization, is described as "well-favored, bright, a good dancer, a fair shot, and a fine tennis player." More effort is expended on describing the rugs and drawings that he owns. The sending of flowers and chocolates is alluded to as if it were a breathless social secret, and repeated in the first few pages. "Gregory Brabazon, notwithstanding his name, was not a romantic creature." Come again? A girl enters a room during dinner and asks,

"Are we late? . . . I've brought Larry back. Is there anything for him to eat?"

"I expect so," smiled Mrs. Bradley. "Ring the bell and tell Eugene to put another place."

"He opened the door for us. I've already told him."

So that was a waste of dialogue, wasn't it? A little further on we learn of Gray Maturin that "though built on so large a scale he was finely proportioned, and stripped he must have been a fine figure of a man." Presumably this would also be true of him when unstripped.

I deliberately did not look up Edmund Wilson's once celebrated polemic against the terrifying banality of *The Razor's Edge* before revisiting the book myself, but I defy anyone to come to a different conclusion. Even Core Vidal, himself no stranger to the Mediterranean-villa milieu, was compelled to agree that Maugham's success was, in effect, in writing for people who did not have a clue about English as a medium for either tragedy or comedy. I would add that mass wants class and always has, and that without the snobbery and the knowing references to fine chefs, splendid galleries, and refined houses, the enterprise wouldn't have stood a chance. But the old boy did show generosity and patience, and set up a prize in his name that encouraged many young writers, among them Kingsley Amis. Despite his exile and his increasingly distraught public and private life, Maugham eventually received an honor from the Crown—but it was for "services to literature," rather than for literature itself, and this distinction represents all the difference in the world. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair. He is writing a biography of Thomas Jefferson for the Eminent Lives series.

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HOOSIERS

The lost world of Booth Tarkington

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

The beautiful name on the spine always seemed more suited to a pirate than to a writer, let alone one who came from the flat, cornstalked world of James Whitcomb Riley and Theodore Dreiser. But Booth Tarkington (1869–1946) was a Book-of-the-Month Club unto himself: five million copies sold in a pre-paperback era; three dozen volumes of fiction, a score of plays. After he won his second Pulitzer, in 1922, the *Literary Digest* pronounced him America's greatest living writer, by means of a poll that now seems as accurate as the magazine's prediction, fourteen years later, that Alf Landon would be President.

Entirely absent from most current histories of American writing, Tarkington was generally scorned by those published just before or after his death. Vernon L. Parrington summed him up as "a purveyor of comfortable literature to middle-class America," and F. O. Matthiessen praised the more serious Dreiser by saying that "he could not have been a Tarkington if he had tried." One finds no mention of Tarkington in *The Oxford Book of American Literary Anecdotes*, let alone in the diaries and letters of his fellow Princetonian Edmund Wilson. Another alumnus, F. Scott Fitzgerald, had Tarkington in mind when he expressed his fear of lapsing into a condition that would render him uninterested in anything but "colored people, children, and dogs." Among two generations of later American novelists, only John O'Hara, ever as mindful of sales as of status, seemed willing to acknowledge Tarkington as an influence.

Like O'Hara, Tarkington quit drinking in his forties, thereby assuring a long, steady output. But in spite of a systematized man-of-letters routine, he remained a wildly uneven writer. "Uneven" may be the last refuge of the literary apologist, but in Tarkington the quality is so sharply up and down as to seem the result of a blood-sugar problem, or some seasonal affective disorder.

The vast body of his mediocre work has so suffocated the fine (*The Magnificent Ambersons*) and the small bit of great (*Alice Adams*) that one decides to go back to Tarkington out of a curiosity both literary and sociological: how does such a ubiquitous and, for a

alization that Tarkington was himself in the throes of nostalgia, setting most of his work two or three decades before he wrote it. He was, in fact, a kind of historical novelist, whose books can now be read only through a double glazing of time. The mood in his work is almost always regretful; Tarkington called his 1928 memoir *The World Does Move*, adopting the perspective of a man whom life is literally passing by. Gone, he noted, were the lamplighter, the *fin de siècle* editorial against speeding bicyclists, the sight of Benjamin Harrison



Tim Holt in Orson Welles's film of Booth Tarkington's *The Magnificent Ambersons*

time, honored figure disappear so quickly and completely?

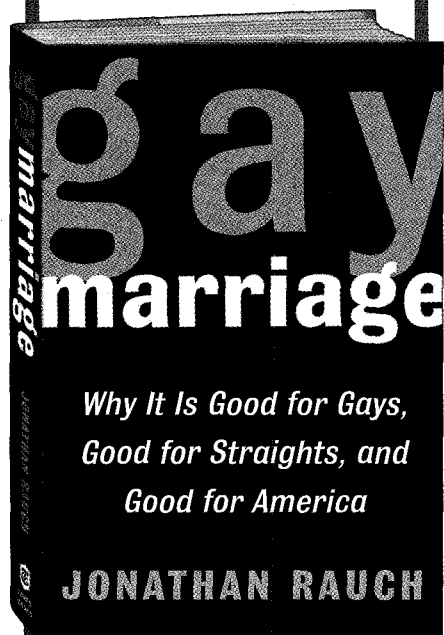
To be caught with Tarkington in one's hands is to be suspected of nostalgia, a willingness to endure the second-rate for the sake of some moonlight on the Wabash, which must still be flowing somewhere through the heartland. But if that's what one is looking for, disappointment will soon set in with the re-

boarding a streetcar in Indianapolis. There is no point in going to Tarkington for what he called the "cheerful placidity in American life [back] then." He was looking for it too.

Will he at least, perhaps, satisfy a nostalgia for youth itself? There are, after all, those novels about the very young, which one read, or was asked to

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read, when very young oneself. So let's get started (as he might have put it in one of his chummy prefaces) with them.

Penrod, published in 1914 but set a bit earlier, in the precisely defined period "when the stable was empty but not yet rebuilt into a garage," has, one discovers right away, a peculiar, obligatory feel. Like the adventures of Falstaff in love, those of Penrod Schofield at the age of eleven were composed on request, from "a lady connected by marriage with the writer." In fact, "at the time of her consent to become thus related she made virtually the condition that he should write something about a boy." Maybe these happy marital origins bear responsibility for the tameness of the production, which is proffered even to the reader like a box of candy.

Whether he's putting a girl's braid into an inkwell, playing drugstore, or

his mischief. The narrator declares "one of the hardest conditions of boyhood" to be "the almost continuous strain put upon the powers of invention by the constant and harassing necessity for explanations of every natural act." A reader feels Tarkington operating under a different but similar burden: the author is too well behaved, not a good enough liar, to imagine this boy.

Seventeen—the best-selling American title of 1916—is even worse. Its hero, William Sylvanus Baxter, is a few years older than *Penrod* and more insipid; he'd be Tom Sawyer to *Penrod*'s Huck if only this boy who will "pant for his first evening clothes as the hart panteth after the water-brook" weren't already a closer match to Tom's goody-goody half-brother Sid. As often happens in Tarkington, the action of *Seventeen* gets going with the arrival of an attractive

"Uneven" may be the last refuge of the literary apologist, but in Tarkington the quality is so sharply up and down as to seem the result of a blood-sugar problem, or some seasonal affective disorder.

tormenting the dog (in some ways the novel's most fully realized character), *Penrod* remains a nice young woman's *idea* of a boy. Even most of the food he gorges himself sick on, at a dog-and-pony show, seems awfully wholesome: cider, sardines, watermelon. His whole young life is too much of a good thing, and the bulk of it is derived from literature. *Penrod* is so referential as to be almost a work of postmodernism—assuming Tarkington could have imagined such a thing with modernism itself just beginning to steamroll over him. In the course of this first book about *Penrod* (has anyone ever read the sequels?), the boy writes an adventure story, acts in a pageant, reads a crime novel, and takes some prankish inspiration from a three-reel movie. The influence of vaudeville, too, seems everywhere apparent in the episodic volume.

None of these faults would kill the book; it is left to *Penrod*'s charmlessness to do that. Bossy, imitative, and concerned with appearances, he tries our patience mostly by the paltriness of

female from another town, in this case Miss Lola Pratt, whose pink parasol and baby talk somehow ignite a tumultuous summertime rivalry in Willie's youthful male circle. Accompanied by her dog Flopit, the burbling Miss Pratt ("Um's own mumsy make ums all right, um's p'eshus Flopit!") is no longer awful just in the spoiled and nauseating way that Tarkington intended as amusing. Almost ninety years on it is impossible not to perceive her as hideously sexualized—an older JonBenet Ramsey, or the Baby Jane waiting to happen. Tarkington unwittingly created a kind of freeze-dried pornography, ready to expand when dipped into the moist knowingness of an age he could hardly envision. But even by the standards of unlost innocence Miss Pratt is bad enough, a sure example of the mimetic fallacy, by which an author succeeds too well in replicating something unpleasant. (Her real-life basis, according to Tarkington's only full-scale biographer, James Woodress, was an illustrator named Rose O'Neill, a "huge pink-and-

white, two-hundred-pound blonde," who created the Kewpie doll.)

Seventeen plays out on the sort of idyllic townscape that's always on its way toward despoilment in the author's more serious books, and it contains the usual share of nice moments when Tarkington is writing above himself: "This haloed summer still idled on its way, yet all the while sped quickly; like some languid lady in an elevator." Even so, despite having a bit more narrative propulsion than *Penrod*, *Seventeen* is another self-conscious literary construction, with invocation of *The Three Musketeers* and Sydney Carton. Much of the story is conveyed in a mock-heroic bellow ("there have been collar-buttons that failed when the destinies of families hung upon them"). Curiously enough, in the letters he wrote to his young nephews, a dozen years before *Seventeen*, Tarkington had employed something like the reverse technique, to much more charming effect. In these compositions, instead of comically pumping up the mundane, he shrank the momentous inside a kind of Hoosier homespun ("Then we saw Lucrezia Borgia's house ... she poisoned more people than Sherman's Restaurant").

Seventeen is not what we would today call a young-adult novel. It was always intended for grown-ups, just as those letters to Tarkington's nephews were almost certainly meant for their parents. No adolescent could be long entertained by the personifications of the title ("To *Seventeen* such a departure is final; it is a vanishing"), or the narrator's constant superiority, however fond, toward his subjects. Tarkington took his biggest risk by letting the reader identify with the one truly believable adult in the book: poor Mr. Parcher, whose daughter is the host for Miss Pratt's endless visit. A forerunner of the sitcom-sap American father, Mr. Parcher seeks only a little respite from the posturing postpubescents who are always underfoot. He longs to be reading Plutarch—and twenty pages into *Seventeen*, so do we.

These two novels of youth, written when the author was in his forties, were a kind of literary second child-

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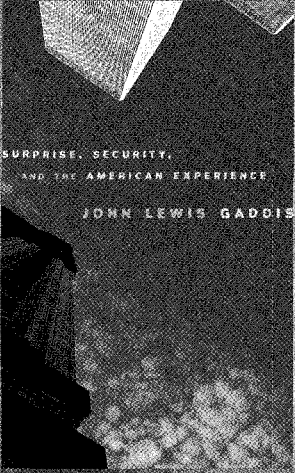
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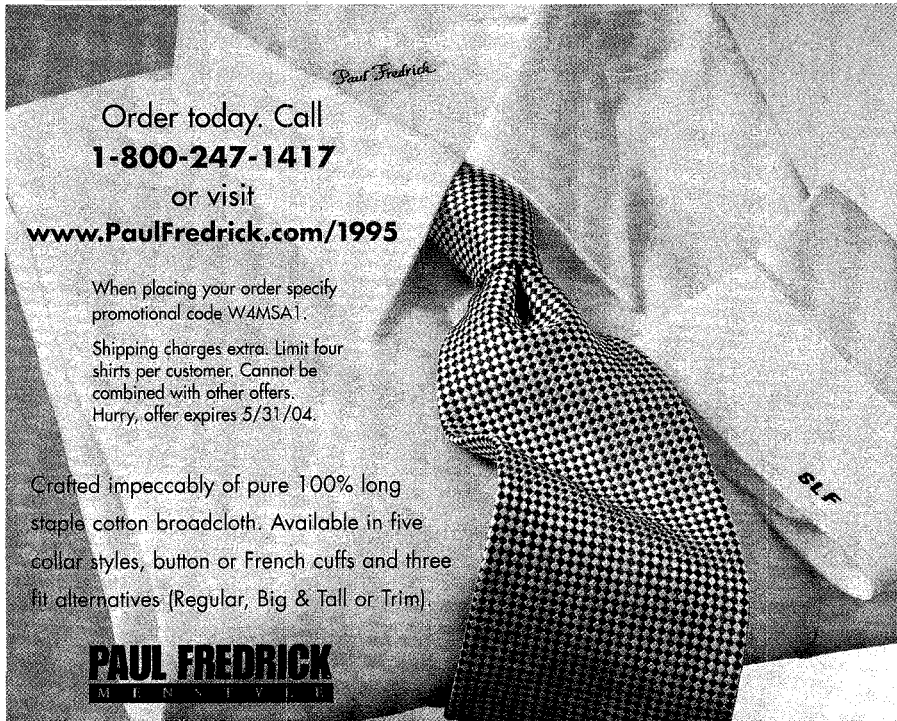
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hood, a regression from the subject matter of politics, which had preoccupied Tarkington at the turn of the century and for a time appeared to be his destiny as both a writer and a man of action. He had been named Newton Booth Tarkington for his mother's brother, Newton Booth (a Republican governor of California from 1871 to 1875), and his father's legal work had brought a lot of politicians around while he was growing up. When Benjamin Harrison boarded that Indianapolis streetcar, it may well have been taking him to the Tarkington home, at 1100 N. Pennsylvania Street.

The Gentleman From Indiana (1899), Tarkington's first published novel, sprang from his awareness that "a Hoosier will talk politics after he is dead." The state has grown Vice Presidents (five, from Schuyler Colfax to Dan Quayle) the way it grows corn, and in the book it makes perfect sense for a local dry-goods merchant to wonder whether his late wife has run across Ulysses S. Grant in the afterlife. The novelist rhapsodizes about the body politic of Plattville as "the beautiful people," a term that now looks funny on the page; but Tarkington, gazing into the democratic future, chose it for his book's exclamatory last line.

After two years at Princeton, the author had spent five back home, living with his parents, writing and being rejected. The twenty-nine-year-old gentleman from Indiana, John Harkless, is seven years out of an eastern college and has been in Plattville for five, running the town's newspaper without much distinction except for crusades against the thieving White-Caps gang. Harkless and Helen Sherwood, the action-starting new girl in town, meet dangerously cute, just as some of the editor's enemies are literally taking a shot at him. However independent and eastern-educated Helen may be ("I'd rather do things for myself"), we're assured that she is also a "born mother." But when Harkless is kidnapped and badly injured by the White-Caps, it is Helen who secretly keeps the *Herald* alive, and under the ambiguous name of H. Fisbee pens an editorial urging that he be drafted for Congress.

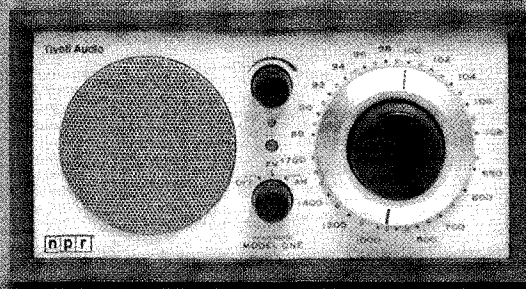
The book is full of fumbles that Tarkington would soon be too smooth

to commit: mechanical crowd scenes, overstuffed descriptions, suspense drawn out past believability, dud classical allusions showing off those two years at Princeton, and prose more purple than any mountain's majesty. Still, one can feel the young novelist struggling toward something like seriousness. When a posse rides to Harkless's rescue, Zane Grey seems to take over the book; yet Tarkington won't allow Harkless's captors to tie him to the railroad tracks, because "they are not familiar with melodrama." Making a visit to Indianapolis at the time this debut novel appeared, William Dean Howells had kind words for it; and Tarkington, his escort around the city, would aspire, off and on for decades, to the sort of realism Howells recommended to American fiction. There was perhaps just enough of it in *The Gentleman From Indiana* to make Howells believe that the author could grow into someone formidable, but still enough staginess and folderol (Matthiessen called the book an "operetta") to make him spot the fatal eagerness to please—the impulse that time and again, between his best productions, would cause Tarkington to lose his nerve and play to the cheap seats.

What appear at first to be some of *Gentleman's* cornier bits—Helen's determination to be a good Hoosier; a possibly unique adverb, "Americanly" (to modify "capable")—are actually what's promising and robust in the book. Tarkington had discovered a subject, and a not unworthy one: citizenship. Judge Briscoe, Helen's host in Plattville, gives his daughter this warning against political cynicism: "The only criticism any one has any business making against Congress is that it's too good for some of the men we send there." Tarkington wrote these words of admonition shortly before serving a single term in the Indiana legislature—one of the best artistic moves he ever made. According to Woodress, his biographer, he ran not just from "a sense of civic responsibility" but because "he needed new experience to stoke the fires of his creative impulse."

Tarkington's single term yielded a volume of stories (*In the Arena*, 1905) that are peopled by some of the most vivid

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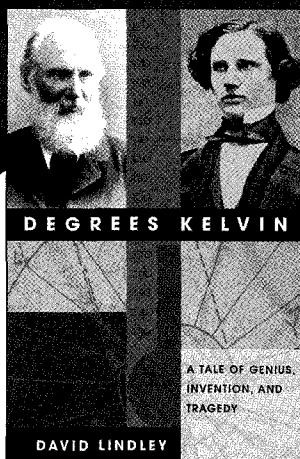
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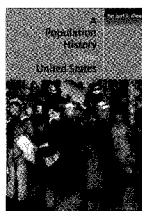
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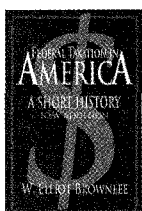
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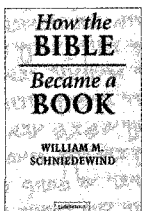
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characters he would ever derive from real-life origins: Uncle Billy Rollinson, an honest simpleton who finally lets himself be bought by the railroads in order to keep his son out of jail; Frank Pixley, a cruel precinct committeeman and a piece of naturalism more in Dreiser's line (he's compared to a fungus); Mrs. Protheroe, a seductive widow and lobbyist for the legalization of Sunday baseball, who doesn't mention to a callow state senator that she owns the baseball park; and Hector J. Ransom, an orating nullity as modern as the title character in *The Candidate*. The collection's standout piece is "The Aliens," a blend of O. Henry and sophisticated realism depicting innocent immigrants ruined by the awful Pixley.

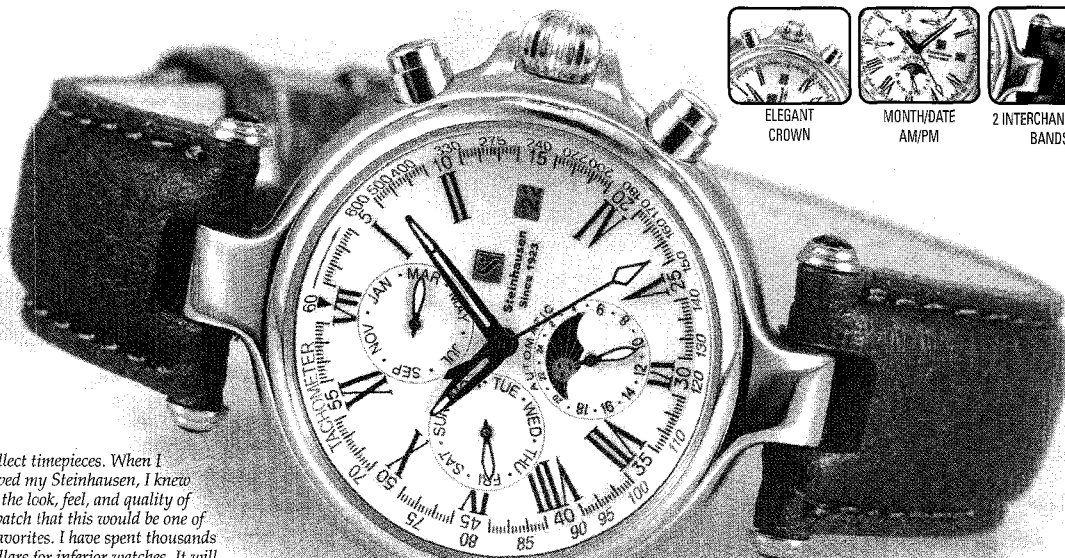
In these tales politics and the penitentiary are never separated by more than a trapdoor, but Tarkington remains in love with democratic potential. After reading the stories, the greatest reformer of the time, Theodore Roosevelt, commanded the author to come to lunch at the White House. TR berated him for "helping to crystallize the feeling that politics is no 'business for a gentleman,'" but he praised *In the Arena* in his letters and went on to swipe its title for the most memorable passage in his 1910 address "Citizenship in a Republic," which Richard Nixon alluded to on the day he left office.

In fact Tarkington was right on message when it came to Roosevelt's ethic of voter involvement. He was bent on dramatizing, not condoning, the white-gloved disdain that the twenty-sixth President feared. "As anybody knows," Tarkington has one of his machine pols declare, "the 'better element' ... act as if they looked down on politics; say it's only helping one boodler against another." For most of our modern history American literary novelists have kept this same disgusted distance from the actual strong-arm practice of small-time politics, allowing commercial writers to present a fantasy version of governance that's usually set in the Oval Office or the Situation Room.

"I am learning!" says the wised-up state senator, after realizing he's been tricked by Mrs. Protheroe. Tarkington was learning too, heading into territory

that could have kept him steadily devoted to Howells's standard for realism. But a case of typhoid fever, followed by an extended recuperation in Maine and Europe, put an end to his brief legislative experience. Severed from the material that might have made him a memorable novel-writing politician, he became instead a full-time Author, whose subject matter would end up being more diffuse than broad. He took the art of compromise he'd seen in the legislature and misapplied it to his own art, indulging in the slick, automatic utterance that turned his career into a literary version of Hector J. Ransom's success at politics.

Political leanings remain discernible in the decades' worth of books that followed *In the Arena*. Toward the great flood tide of immigration Tarkington displayed, in contrast to the strong sympathy of "The Aliens," a sort of regretful nativism, accepting changes to the American cultural complexion with the conviction that later arrivals were more interested in money than in freedom. On matters of race one can locate him somewhere between the normal, automatic bigotries of his era and a positively oafish delight in the way things were. Paul Fussell, in an otherwise level-headed defense of *Penrod* against PC expurgation, sees in that novel only "affectionate condescension toward Negroes." In fact, two African-American boys, Herman and Verman, mumbling in dialect, are presented like sideshow exhibits even before *Penrod* and his buddy Sam actually display them as such during a show they put on in a hayloft. And in *The Gentleman From Indiana*, Tarkington—having grown up the son of a southern-mannered father in a Copperhead state—writes with a condescension that's less affectionate than outright romantic, giving us glimpses of "happy negroes" out of Thomas Nelson Page. Like many Roosevelt Progressives, he got off the train of reform before TR's distant cousin turned the Square Deal into something entirely New. By the late 1920s, warning against a socialist panacea, Tarkington was surprised to be describing himself as "the liberal of a former age."



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A late-life admiration for the moderate Wendell Willkie—his fellow Hoosier from over in Elwood—would keep his anti-FDR feelings from slipping into mere reaction, and in one key respect Tarkington seems more forward-looking than even the most left-wing novelist from the period between the wars. Indeed, only general ignorance of his work has kept him from being pressed into contemporary service as a literary environmentalist—not just a “conservationist,” in the TR mode, but an emerald-Green decrier of internal combustion. The automobile, whose production was centered in Indianapolis before World War I, became the snorting, belching villain that, along with soft coal, laid waste to Tarkington’s Edens. His objections to the auto were aesthetic—in *The Midlander* (1923) automobiles sweep away the more beautifully named “phaetons” and “surreys”—but also something far beyond that. Dreiser, his exact Indiana contemporary, might look at the Model T and see wage slaves in need of unions and sit-down strikes;

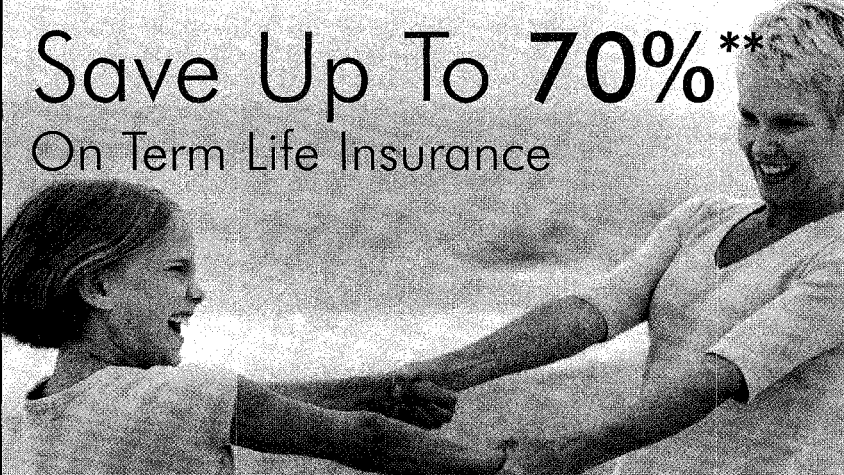
Tarkington saw pollution, and a filthy tampering with human nature itself. “No one could have dreamed that our town was to be utterly destroyed,” he wrote in *The World Does Move*. His important novels are all marked by the soul-killing effects of smoke and asphalt and speed, and even in *Seventeen*, Willie Baxter fantasizes about winning Miss Pratt by the rescue of precious little Flopit from an automobile’s rushing wheels.

Today’s reader may recognize something basic here, but Tarkington’s contemporaries probably regarded all this as a cranky motif, since during the years of his greatest literary stature and celebrity Tarkington himself kept paving over this one abrasive layer of his thought. He would speak his piece on the subject, but was finally more intent on offering his readers a pleasant Sunday drive—along with the sociological reassurance that they weren’t really the Babbitts and boobs that Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken kept taking them for.

In *The Plutocrat* (1927), despite his claim never to have read Lewis’s novel,

Tarkington acted the crowd-pleasing literary politician and concocted an antidote to Babbitt in the shape of Earl Tinker, a midwestern utilities baron traveling to Europe and North Africa with the little woman and their daughter. Boisterous and philistine, Tinker is chiefly interested in seeing the electrical grid and sewage system of any foreign port of call. But he is also philanthropic, shrewd, and tolerant—the commonsensical new Roman conqueror, by Tarkington’s lights. The author even lets this protagonist take victorious leave of the reader by standing up in a detestable automobile, “gloriously waving his shiny hat.”

James Woodress somewhat misidentified “egoism” as a major subject of Tarkington’s work. More exactly it was snobbery—a narrower thematic terrain. Tarkington’s hero (even Penrod) is very often a snob whose downfall comes not from social position but from social *positioning*, an attempt to climb the next rung or just stay perched



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on the current one. The author's most enduring public success, *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918), presents the cruelest of all his somebodies: George Amberson Minafer, whose grandfather, "the Major," made the Ambersons financially magnificent during the Panic of 1873.

Amberson Mansion, whose wood-work alone cost \$60,000, is the locus for an essaylike first chapter that stands as the author's key pronouncement on destructive change in the early twentieth century: the disappearance of streetcars, serenades, and leisure itself into a farrago of new industrial smoke. The novel's superbly informative settings (Tarkington is the American laureate of residential real estate, alert to every fountain, view, and wainscot) are nearly as important as its plot, which readers are likely to remember less from the book than from Orson Welles's 1942 film. Major Amberson's daughter, Isabel, throws over her attractive suitor Eugene Morgan because of a harmless drunken scrape he gets into, and goes on to marry the colorless Wilbur Minafer, a "steady young businessman." Their son, George, who has a reprise as horrid little Henry in *The Midlander*, grows up as the town brat, decrying the "riffraff" and flicking a whip from his dogcart. Everyone else may wish for George's "come-upance," but his mother—and mothers are always more important than fathers in Tarkington—sees him as literally "God's gift." She seems untroubled even by her son's only ambition, to be a yachtsman—a sign of risible deracination in a midwesterner so assertive of his family's heritage and standing.

Tarkington's world is an indoor one; his climaxes and reversals come during cotillions, not whaling expeditions or raft trips down the river. If he lacks Henry James's drawing-room subtleties, there's no denying the power of the party scenes in which Eugene Morgan—come back to town, years later, with a beautiful grown daughter and the intention of manufacturing motorcars—begins to disrupt the erotic algebra of the extended Amberson family, whose finances are heading into rapid decline along with Wilbur Minafer's

health. Morgan rekindles not only Isabel's long-ago desire for romance but also the suppressed ardor of her spinster sister-in-law, Fanny. Tarkington made the impressive aesthetic decision to have the otherwise sympathetic Morgan be the automobile man (he did the same thing with *The Midlander's* Dan Oliphant), while the unattractive George Minafer is the exponent of the author's own wistful values. When it falls to George to defend the great old Amberson lawn against a housing development, Tarkington is shuffling the reader's emotional pack and dealing out the unexpected.

Further surprises come with each sight of Aunt Fanny, a Hoosier version of Balzac's desiccated, poisonous Cousin Bette, alternately piteous and diabolical, who fills George's hot head, after the death of his father, with what she claims is town gossip about the way his mother encouraged Morgan's attentions even before the death of her husband. Fanny and George, with their weeping and nausea over the rumors, are both sexual hysterics, and when George slams the door in Eugene Morgan's face, it's the erotic undercurrent of his mother's lifelong worship that's powering his arm; when he and Isabel subsequently flee to Europe, it feels furtive and incestuous. While abroad, the two of them are spared seeing the industrial strangulation of their home town, but Isabel's health fails. Upon their return George won't let Morgan even approach her deathbed. Isabel's precious but by now impoverished son is reduced to taking a dangerous job in a chemical factory and, in yet another parody of marriage, forced to go into lodgings with Aunt Fanny. Tarkington sets the boardinghouse thermostat to a brilliant chill: "After dinner [George] would escort his aunt from the table in some state (not wholly unaccompanied by a leerish wink or two from the wags of the place) and he would leave her at the door of the communal parlours and card rooms, with a formality in his bow of farewell which afforded an amusing contrast to Fanny's always voluble protests."

The Magnificent Ambersons is certainly flawed (one never believes the attraction of Morgan's daughter, Lucy,



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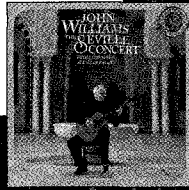
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to George), and padded enough for one to wonder if it might not have benefited from the editorial ruthlessness that befell Welles's film, cut by the studio from 132 minutes to eighty-eight after a disappointing preview. Even so, only six years ago *The Magnificent Ambersons* managed to get Tarkington onto the Modern Library's list of the 100 best novels of the twentieth century (albeit at No. 100).

One won't argue with the inclusion, even though Tarkington could not resist a wildly sentimental conclusion presided over by Isabel's spirit, which Morgan manages to channel through a medium. The novelist once decried unhappy endings as the means by which authors "cheaply" earn a reputation for emotional power—a rationalization, actually, of his own kind of customer relations. His mentor Howells had said that

But Adams's appreciation of Lamb is not shared by his termagant wife, who believes the boss undervalues her husband in the only manner that counts these days. "Now you listen to me, Virgil Adams: the way the world is now, money *is* family." Mrs. Adams is the worst of Tarkington's many viperish wives, pushing Virgil to start his own glue factory with a formula long ago developed on Mr. Lamb's money and time. She is as much a part of the new capitalism as the smoke and noise now choking the city, and by succumbing to her taunts Adams risks a financial disaster more grimly personal than the slow dynastic slide of the Ambersons.

And yet in this, the best plotted of his novels, Tarkington subordinates everything to the small, dank tragedy of the Adamses' daughter, Alice, a brilliantly rendered blend of her mother's

The vast body of his mediocre work has so suffocated the fine and the small bit of great that one goes back to Tarkington out of a curiosity both literary and sociological: how does a ubiquitous figure disappear so completely?

Americans wanted tragedy with a happy ending, and in book after book Tarkington tended to take this witticism for a prescription.

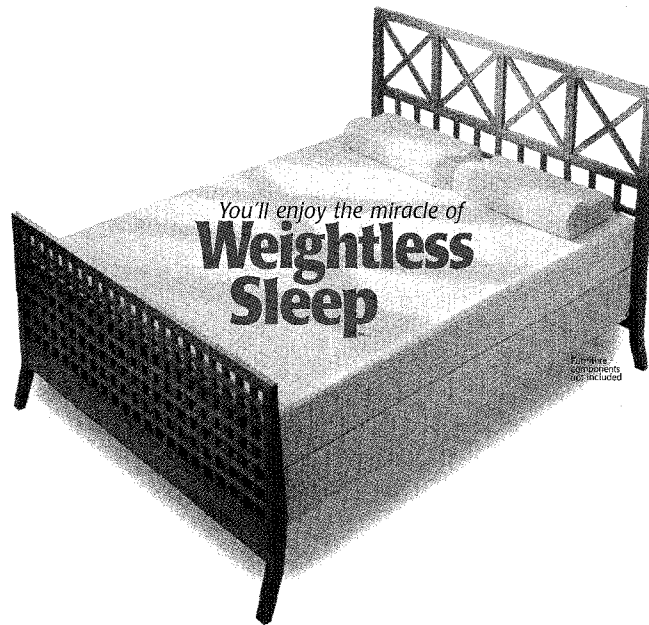
Only once, three years after *The Magnificent Ambersons*, did he fully resist his own patent medicine, producing his greatest work, a book the Modern Library's judges might credibly have put into their top fifty, if they had remembered to include it at all.

Alice Adams "is my most actual & 'life-like' work ... about as humorous as tuberculosis," Tarkington wrote shortly after publishing the book, in 1921. The novel is fundamentally preoccupied with neurosis (in the form of the heroine's compulsions), but it begins with the physical ills of Alice's father: Virgil Adams lies upstairs, trying to convalesce in the usual Midland city that's now covered with fumes and smoke and the soot of soft coal. His job is being held open for him by his benevolent boss, Mr. Lamb, an old-style capitalist in the mold of Major Amberson.

pretensions and father's good heart, but animated by a nervous cleverness all her own. At twenty-two, despite good looks and vivacity, this young woman, so desperate to be noticed, has doomed herself to an entirely strategic life of gesture and imitation: aping the smile of an actress, wearing a turban with a white veil, carrying a malacca cane and passing out the calling cards that became obsolete a generation before. Caught in the middle class, Alice manages to be both George Minafer and the people he despises. In a passage that may lack Fitzgerald's lyricism but equals his social precision, Tarkington makes clear how time has already passed Alice by.

When she was sixteen "all the nice boys in town," as her mother said, crowded the Adamses' small veranda and steps, or sat near by, cross-legged on the lawn, on summer evenings; and at eighteen she had replaced the boys with "the older men." By this time most of "the other girls," her contemporaries, were away at school or college, and when they came

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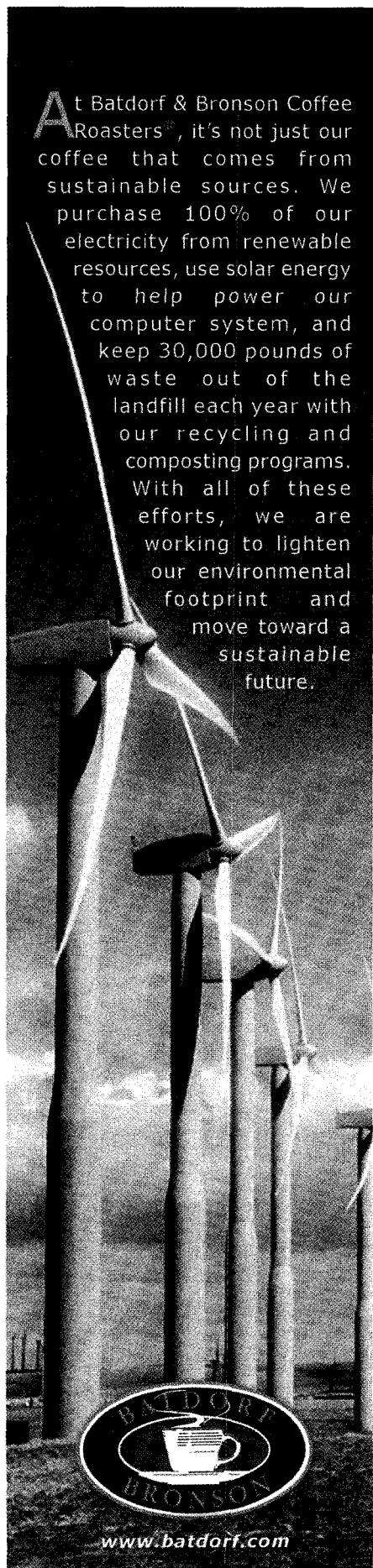


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home to stay, they "came out"—that feeble revival of an ancient custom offering the maiden to the ceremonial inspection of the tribe. Alice neither went away nor "came out"... She had been a belle too soon.

Like one of Tarkington's Negro child-pals, Alice finds herself good enough for the games of youth, but outgrown by force of social and economic custom. She now barely gets an invitation to the fancy Mildred Palmer's dance, but manages, once there, to spend time with the good-looking Arthur Russell, who ought to be out of reach but is enough his own man to be "fascinated by her quickness" and powers of flirtation. What he does not yet realize is that her show-horse verbal style cannot be turned off. Alice will soon, in one of her few honest moments, admit to Russell, "I was wondering what I wanted to make you think of me."

Self-awareness gives Alice a poignancy that Emma Bovary, her literary forebear in pretentiousness, could never attain. But Alice is more than self-aware; she is self-destructive. She knows that she doesn't need to fake anything with the upstanding Arthur Russell—knows, indeed, that in his case it will be counterproductive to pretend that her family has had a long commercial feud with the Lambs; that they live in their flimsy colonial house out of mere eccentricity; and that her brother was shooting dice with the Negro boys in the cloakroom at Mildred Palmer's for "research" purposes ("He's rather literary"). But she does all these things and more, because she is in a dizzy double bind—unable to drop her old stratagems for finding love, and newly compelled to exercise them in pursuit of an even deeper goal: self-immolation. She predicts her own ruin ("I'm just sure something spiteful's going to happen to me") because it's what she most desires. Unlike other Tarkington characters, Alice has a subconscious; she was constructed with the kind of psychological basement the author usually skimmed on. Wherever she came from, Tarkington must have been astounded to find this frantic female inversion of his own fatal desire to please an audience.

The dinner party that drives Russell

"As an account of a city whose economy slips into crisis as a result of a medical catastrophe, this has never been bettered."—Roy Porter

The Great Plague

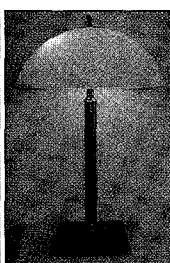
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away would in another of Tarkington's novels be a long, comic pratfall. Here the farce is hung with crêpe, and each piece of the agony is keenly real: the family's obvious inexperience with the caviar the Adams women insist on offering; the sweltering weather that turns the hot soup and Brussels sprouts into instruments of nausea; the supposedly regular housemaid who's actually been hired for just a few hours to serve the meal. "Why, it's *finished*, isn't it?" Alice asks in a trembling voice, eager for defeat, when even Russell's patience and good manners can bear no more. The evening that Tennessee Williams's Gentleman Caller would later spend with Laura Wingfield is no more affecting than what Tarkington writes here; nor is it conceivable that in creating the climax of *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams was unfamiliar with this expertly blocked playlet inside a novel famous during his youth.

For once Tarkington keeps his nerve. He very nearly loses it, holding out a sentimental sprig of hope that Russell will give Alice another try, but on the last pages he makes her walk through "that portal of doom, Frincke's Business College"—the fate worse than death that this would-be Rosalind has been avoiding for 400 pages. If the reader imagines Alice forty years later, it is not with Russell but struggling to master an electric typewriter just before retiring, alone, to her parents' old cracker-box colonial. She could even now, just barely, be alive, as Katharine Hepburn, who played her in the 1935 movie, was until last summer. On the page, unique among Tarkington's creations, she remains indisputably so, because, as the author wrote to his friend George C. Tyler, "the girl is drawn without any liking or disliking of her by the writer." Whether he knew the term or not, Tarkington had stumbled on the practice of what Keats called "negative capability"—the artist's gift for suspending judgment while he simply creates. It is a quality unknown in commercial filmmaking: the movie poster for *Alice Adams* exclaimed, "Everybody Will Adore Her!"—even Arthur Russell, who, as played by Fred MacMurray, manfully breaks through Alice's compulsive nonsense

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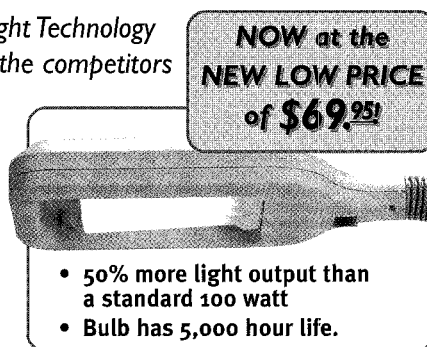
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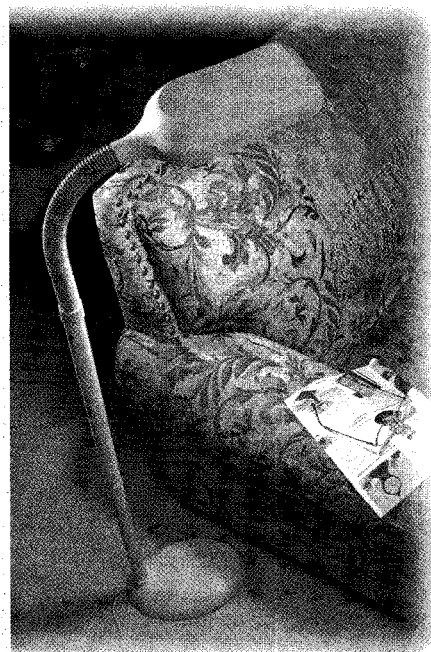
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and embraces her in the final fade-out. About the worst thing one can say of the film is that Hollywood took *Alice Adams*—a great and by now largely forgotten book—and turned it into a Booth Tarkington novel.

The American Writer and the Great Depression (1966), edited by Harvey Swados, is another book one won't find Tarkington in. He had nothing much to say about an economic calamity that was undoing only a smoky prosperity he hadn't liked to begin with. Everything significant he'd had to utter was already sealed inside those small, boxy, wide-ruled books of the teens and the twenties—even as he lived and kept writing through World War II.

He retains the value of exact social detailing (this writer who can remind us of an age when widows consoled themselves with "In Memoriam" and a moment when the term "living room" seemed as coarse as "lifestyle"), but the twin peaks of *Alice Adams* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* make us understand how typically limited was his reach. A half century has passed since Woodress tried propping him up with some female company that has enjoyed a better critical afterlife than he: "With Cather, Glasgow, Wharton, and other older novelists still active," the biographer wrote, Tarkington "went on recording honestly the life he observed from his somewhat detached vantage point." Perhaps as good a local colorist as Glasgow, Tarkington lacked the great steady artistry of Cather and the more flashy sort of Wharton—either of which might have left him a writer with much still to say to us. One senses that he knew it would be so—knew that the more adaptable aspects of his American place and time would find later, living avatars, while his books got trapped in time's amber. The implacable optimism of Dan Oliphant, his "Midlander," would be carried into our own day by someone like Ronald Reagan, of Dixon, Illinois—whereas the Manhattan General Society Library's copy of *The Midlander*, prior to my borrowing it for this essay, was last due back on December 21, 1925. ■

Thomas Mallon's latest novel, *Bandbox*, was published in January.

NEW FICTION

NEAT STRUCTURE, GRAND NOTIONS

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

.....

Read one page of this English comedy and you'll not be surprised to learn that Gardam already has two Whitbread Awards under her belt. Her characters, Dickensian in their number, variety, and abounding eccentricities, carry on so convincingly that she seems to be channeling, rather than creating, these people. Tough and loquacious Surrey matrons, a Yorkshire ascetic and his Oxbridge-accented former hippie wife

(who, it turns out, is in love with his brother), a precocious and needy eleven-year-old, an endearingly prickly former schoolmaster and his wife, make up only a very few of those who circle, pretty much helplessly, the infant Faith Fox, orphaned from the

first sentence. As in most comedies, life is dark here, both literally—hours elapse between breakfast and sunrise in the north of England in December—and figuratively. Faith's grandfather sums up the view that prevails throughout most of the novel: "By God, Dolly, it's a bloody awful condition, humanity. Everyone dying except the ones you'd never miss, and not a body coming in to see you." Brilliantly, however, Gardam pokes fun at despair; sensible though it may be. "There's someone coming now," Dolly responds in this particular instance. "I heard the gate." This novel is so lively and colorful, and conveys the hopelessness of life so amusingly, that I could hardly believe, halfway through, that I was considering giving it up. Why, I wondered, are modern English characters so often detached and difficult to warm to, at least for an American reader? And here, I thought, is an example of terrific but pointless writing, observations wonderfully true and remarkably expressed that can't possibly add up to anything in the end—the problem with so much contemporary fiction. Luckily, I rarely listen to myself, because I could not have been more wrong. Gar-



FAITH FOX
by Jane Gardam
Carroll & Graf

dam couples her genius for the close-up, perfectly rendered portrait with a taste for satisfyingly neat structure and grand notions of hope for humanity; those detached characters are all wearing their hearts on their sleeves by the novel's finish. She gets away in the end even with the hokey touch of giving Faith's name significance, because she's made you entirely forget that such a thing is possible.

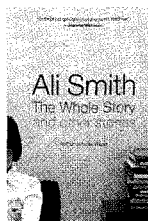
GENDER-NEUTRAL

BY BROOKE ALLEN

.....

What whole story? The point of Ali Smith's new collection would seem to be that there is no such thing. Experience is infinitely divisible; perspectives shimmer and refract. In her opening tale, for instance, "The Universal Story," the narrative shifts rapidly and repeatedly from one point of view to another, even a housefly takes a turn

in the leading role. It sounds gimmicky, but Smith, the author of the remarkable and highly acclaimed novel *Hotel World* (2002), is not a gimmicky writer. Her simple, economical, blade-sharp prose dignifies whatever subject she chooses, and endows even the oddest human behavior with an inarguable inner logic. The British press frequently pigeonholes Smith as "Scottish" and "lesbian." Sexual orientation in these stories is usually in question, because in most of her pairings she has declined to state the sex of the protagonists. The reader is free to imagine these couples as man and woman, or as two men, or as two women: the stories work perfectly well for any of these configurations, which proves that a very large portion of the experience of love and partnership is shared by the sexes. Smith's vision, like her prose, is startlingly fresh; her stories are short and suggestive. No longer a young Turk (she is now over forty), Smith has moved smoothly into place as one of Britain's most important and established writers. ■



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"MARTINI-AGE VICTORIAN"

The novelist John P. Marquand was a brilliant satirist with a "dictaphonic ear" for dialogue

BY MARTHA SPAULDING

.....

In December of 1936, after reading advance proofs of John P. Marquand's novel *The Late George Apley*, Upton Sinclair wrote to Little, Brown, Marquand's publisher,

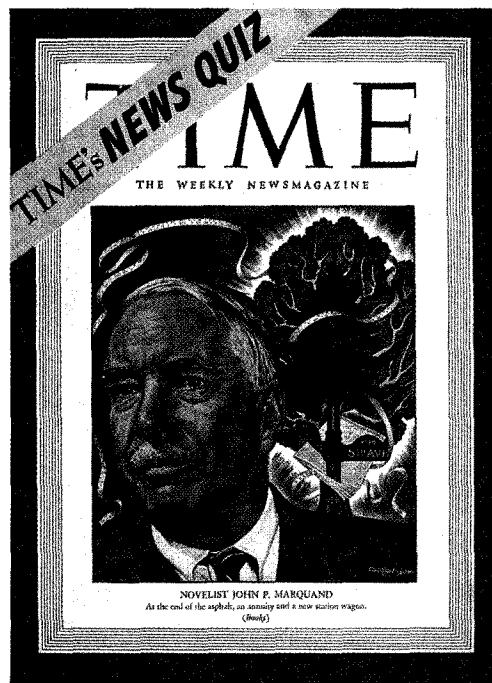
I started to read it and it appeared to me to be an exact and very detailed picture of a Boston aristocrat, and as I am not especially interested in this type, I began to wonder why you had sent it to me. But finally I began to catch what I thought was a twinkle in the author's eye ... One can never be sure about Boston, and I hope I am not mistaken in my idea that the author is kidding the Boston idea. It is very subtle and clever, and I am not sure that Boston will get it.

Not all of Boston did get it. "There were some in the Back Bay," Edward Weeks, then the editor of *The Atlantic*, wrote in 1960, "who accepted it quite literally as a biography and who appeared at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts on Sunday afternoons asking to be shown the 'Apley Bronzes.'" In general, however, this pseudo memoir was acclaimed for its affectionate send-up of Old Bostonians from "the water side of Beacon Street" as personified by George Apley (1866–1933), whose feeble attempts at rebellion against the society in which he lived were crushed in a vise of snobbery, tradition, and privilege. Apley's "biographer," the pompous, obtuse Horatio Willing, manages to reveal the sad truths of his subject's resigned conformity in the very effort to airbrush them away. Decades after its publication an anonymous writer in *The New Yorker* called *Apley* the "best-wrought fictional monument to the nation's Protestant elite that we know of."

For almost twenty years the forty-four-year-old John Marquand had been churning out formulaic stories and serials for mass-circulation magazines. (He had also created Mr. Moto, a scrupulously polite Japanese secret agent, wildly popular in six books and on the

screen, where he was played by Peter Lorre in eight movies from 1937 to 1939.) But *Apley*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1938, marked the beginning of his career as a novelist. His next three novels sold so well that in 1944 *Life* magazine called Marquand "the most successful novelist in the United States." In 1949, after two more, he was featured on the covers of both *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Though in his day Marquand was compared to Sinclair Lewis and John



O'Hara, and his social portrait of twentieth-century America was likened to Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, critics rarely took him very seriously. Throughout his career he believed, resentfully, that their lack of regard stemmed from his early success in the "slicks." Nevertheless, for his stylish depiction of the changes in American society over six decades, his humorous if occasionally grim observations on domesticity, and, above all, his sonorous, seductive prose, he deserves to be rediscovered. (Until very recently Marquand's nine

major novels were all out of print; now Little, Brown has reissued *Apley* under its Back Bay Books imprint and plans to bring out his second novel, *Wickford Point*, in August.)

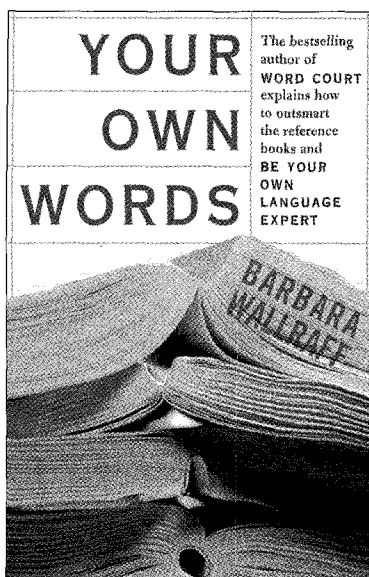
I first read Marquand's novels twenty-odd years ago. Back then they swept me up in nostalgia for a time I'd never actually known—my parents' youth, hinted at in anecdotes and glimpsed in old photographs. The outdated, elusive glamour of movies from the 1930s and 1940s surrounded his characters, who religiously dress for dinner, keep eccentric retainers, and wait a prescribed amount of time before using one another's first names. Re-reading these books today, I find that the nostalgia and the glamour are undiminished—and that the dialogue occasionally has a cinematic brittleness. But more striking to me now (perhaps for obvious reasons) is the way in which he regularly tapped into the rue and longing of middle age.

Marquand—whom the critic Charles Brady, in a long appraisal published in 1952, called a "Martini-Age Victorian"—wrote primarily about manners, marriage, and money. In a period during which the order and traditions of Apley's world were smashed by two global wars and a depression, he set heroes who are confused, adrift, and searching for new values and meaning to replace the old. These men are invariably at a professional or marital turning point; and just as invariably they are drawn into their pasts by those ribbons of memory that flutter in us all. Marquand became known for his flashbacks, which he seamlessly, beautifully interwove with the narrative present in what one critic called "witchery with time."

Point of No Return (1949)—which, *Apley* notwithstanding, may be Marquand's best book—opens on a rainy April morning in suburban New York; the hero, Charles Gray, as he stands in his modern bathroom, remembers the family bathroom of his boyhood in Clyde, Massachusetts, where an April rain would be colder, and would beat

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harder on the windows. Coincidence
thereafter conspires with memory to keep
Clyde surging in and out of Charles's
present, as we learn of the lost love of his
youth—another recurring theme in Mar-
quand—and the destruction of his will-
ful, reckless father in the Crash of 1929.
The flashbacks in *H. M. Pulham, Esquire*
(1941) are generated by Harry Pulham's
upcoming twenty-fifth Harvard reunion.
In *Melville Goodwin, U.S.A.* (1951) they
flow naturally from intensive magazine
interviews with a war hero.

The elegiac strain in Marquand's
fiction is offset by good-humored satire
and dry one-liners ("The cocktails were
a credit to Allen in that they proved con-
clusively that he seldom drank them").
In *So Little Time* (1943), which takes
place as America prepares to enter World
War II, Jeffrey Wilson muses on how
the generic foreign correspondent has
been elevated in the nation's eyes from
"stoop-shouldered man ... living amid
the smell of cabbage in some dingy apart-
ment on the Boulevard Saint-Germain"
to "debonair man of the world," to whom
heads of state are "familiar and rather
amusingly uncomplex figures." Parody-
ing the language of his targets (who
ranged from literary agents to contractors
to pediatricians) was a common Mar-
quand method: "Your Correspondent
brought away something that he would
always remember—the sad lilt of a voice,
the brave self-confidence of a laugh ...
He felt ... great imponderable forces in
the making, the tramp of peoples inex-
orably on the march."

Jeffrey's internal spoof covers more
than a page of closely spaced type. But
Marquand could poke fun in just a line
or two: a pretentious Harvard professor
in *Wickford Point* (1939) is "the sort of
bachelor who never made himself trou-
blesome with liquor or in taxis." An Army
public-relations officer in *Melville Good-
win, U.S.A.* is suggestive of "a regis-
tered human retriever who could go on
a complicated liaison mission ... and
bring back VIPs alive, unruffled, and
contented, to any designated point."

Marquand would frequently roll
sentences one after another like waves,
repeating forms to build momentum
before gliding ashore with a flourish.
Charles Gray, a successful banker, reflects

on how his character was formed in
reaction to his father's headstrong im-
providence.

Except for a few brief moments, he
was to face no danger or uncalculated
risk. He was to measure his merri-
ment and hedge on his tragedies. He
was to water down elation and miti-
gate disaster ... Yet whenever he
thought of himself as a dull, deluded
opportunist ... he always remembered
the intensity of his own feelings when
his father had been speaking. There
had been a hideous sense of in-
evitable disaster, and no possible way
to stop it.

What one critic called his "dicta-
phonic ear" for dialogue served Mar-
quand well, and never more so than in
his scenes of domestic life. His portraits
of marriage are devoid of romance or
idealism (these are reserved for boyhood
loves), and so real as to be painful even
when they are comic. Both Marquand's
own marriages failed, the second quite
miserably, and perhaps as a result his
female characters are often grasping,
nagging, critical, or domineering. *So Little
Time* opens at the breakfast table, where
Jeffrey Wilson's wife, Madge, punctuates
the conversation with variations on "You
never tell me things"—to which Jeffrey
replies, "There isn't any more to tell."
A long bedtime conversation between
Harry Pulham and his wife, Kay (whose
adultery caused an attempt to ban *H. M.
Pulham, Esquire* in Boston), gives us the
sense that it has all been said before.

"Why is it," Kay said, "we always
seem to end up talking about indi-
gestion or drains?"

"I guess that's true of everyone,"
I said.

"Oh, no, it isn't," said Kay. "Take
the Trilbys—"

I stirred uneasily. Kay was always
taking the Trilbys.

"Did you see Egbert help her over
the rocks?"

"Damn the Trilbys!" I said. "You
don't like to be helped and you know it."

"I'd like it if you'd try sometimes,"
Kay said.

"I do try," I said. "And I don't like
the Trilbys."

"That's because they're interesting,"
Kay said.

Harry comes to feel that love is made
up of "not passion or wish, but days and
years." The hero of *Women and Thomas*

Harrow (1958), Marquand's bleakest book by far, realizes as he tries to comfort his weeping third wife that "they were alone there, clasped together by a hideous loneliness." It "shocked him so deeply that he could think of nothing more to say."

Marquand's books essentially stay in the domestic realm; their drama occurs over cocktails, or in country-house libraries. The author was ever attentive to sensuous details: fabrics, furniture, and pictures as well as sounds, smells, and physical sensations. In a memorable passage from *Wickford Point* he renders both the languid atmosphere of a summer day and the psychology of the Brill family—a pack of bloodsucking layabouts who somehow manage to cast a spell over the sour, sardonic narrator, Jim Calder.

Tranquil, soul-satisfying apathy settled over the dining room. The sound of droning insects came through the window like the soft breath of sleep; an oriole sang a few throaty, liquid notes and stopped exhausted; the leafy shadows of elm branches scarcely moved upon the lawn. A house fly buzzed and beat its head against the window screen. The collision made a metallic sound which was followed by silence. The fly rubbed its wings with its hind legs, but did not try again. As Cousin Clothilde gazed at the smoke from her cigarette I noticed a lack of customary sound. The tall clock in the corner had stopped.

"Soul-satisfying apathy," an arresting concept, hints at the power of the Brills. Every image in the passage drags us toward somnolence—the snorelike sounds of insects, the exhausted oriole and frustrated house fly, Clothilde's tranced contemplation of drifting smoke. The stopped clock conjures both loss of consciousness and the rampant disorder of the Brill household, where people don't do anything and objects don't work.

To some, Marquand's books may seem period pieces, his sentences old-fashioned and formal, his stories' frameworks too similar. Nevertheless, he reaches out from recent history with an intensity of feeling, a beguiling humor, and a magical facility with the sounds and rhythms of language that can lift readers up and carry them away. ▀

Martha Spaulding is a deputy managing editor of The Atlantic.

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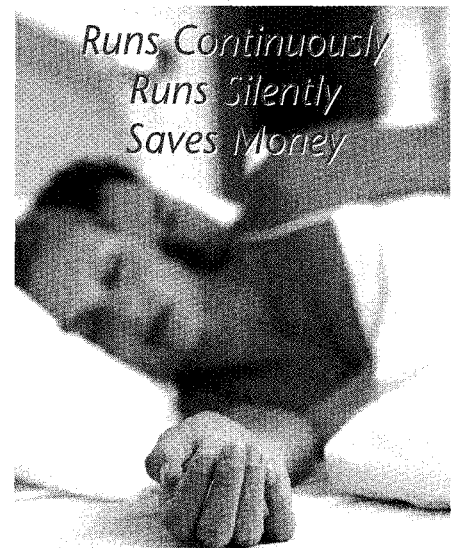
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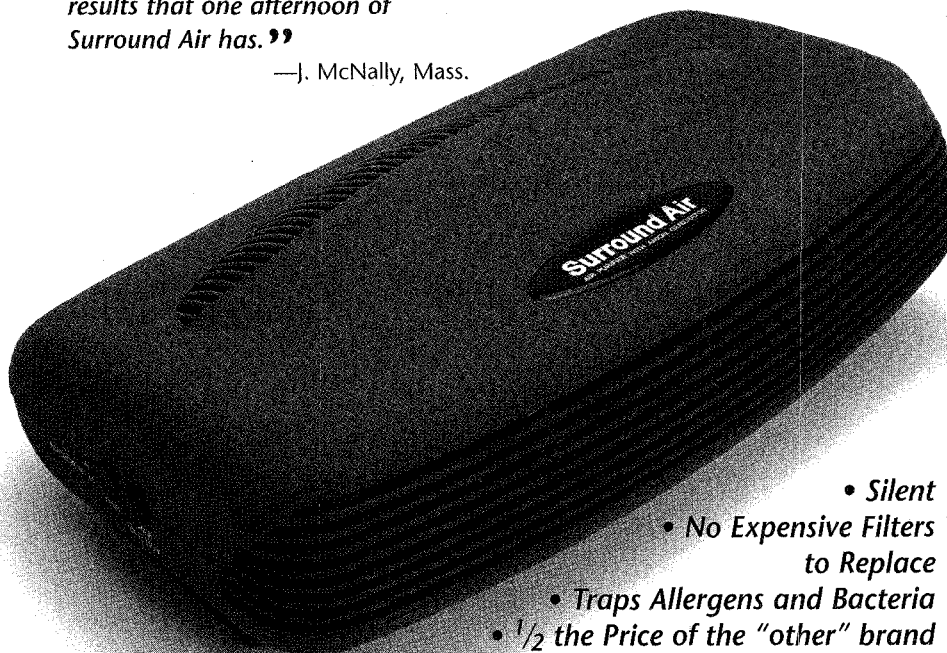
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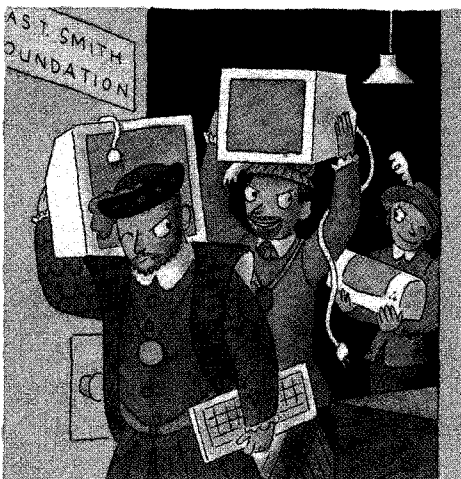
BY CULLEN MURPHY

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Some years ago *The Economist* published an impish feature in which the editors rated the world's best intellectual watering holes as if they were resorts. They focused on meetings at such places as Davos, in Switzerland, and Ditchley Park, in England, and on conferences held under the auspices of such groups as the Aspen Institute (Colorado) and Pugwash (various locales). Little symbols indicated the quality of the accommodations and the company. "Ditchley's charm is that it has managed to preserve the trappings of a great British country house," the editors observed. "Loll late on a Saturday night with port and cigar in one of the fine drawing rooms at Ditchley Park, half close the eyes, and you are Churchill during a wartime weekend, after a dinner spent mulling over the future of the world." In all, the feature was a good-natured send-up of the privileges enjoyed by cosmopolitan thought-leaders under the auspices of the gilded nonprofit sector of the Western world—life on the gravy jet.

Well, "good-natured" is not entirely correct: there was an implicit edge to the commentary. The nonprofit realm as a whole—Exemptia, as this fabled place might be called, encompassing think tanks and academic institutions, churches and foundations—becomes larger with every year. Throughout the boom of the 1990s money poured at record levels into the coffers of philanthropic foundations in particular. Thousands of new foundations were established, bringing the number in the United States alone to upwards of 60,000, and total assets to more than \$400 billion. Foundations

have become "so much more significant so rapidly," Nicholas Lemann observed in these pages in 1997, that oversight of their activities, never robust, cannot keep up. Last year the Internal Revenue Service was able to conduct reviews of scarcely more than a hundred of those 60,000 foundations. Most do not release detailed reports on their activities and finances. It was just a matter of time before critics started to wonder if Exemptia



was exempt not only from taxes but from regulation of any kind.

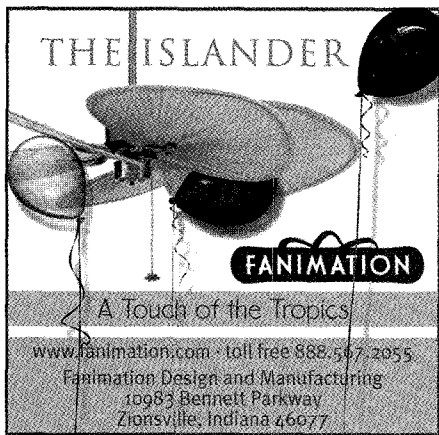
Now that time appears to have come. *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and other newspapers have been looking aggressively into conflicts of interest and the generous salaries paid to executives and trustees of some foundations and charities. Item: Earlier this year three directors of the Grand Marnier Foundation, in New Jersey, resigned and paid \$250,000 apiece in fines to settle a lawsuit alleging that they had enriched themselves at the

foundation's expense. Item: In Massachusetts a trustee of a family foundation reportedly increased his compensation in order to pay for a daughter's \$200,000 wedding. Item: In Washington, D.C., an audit of the local United Way revealed that the former chief executive had received some \$1.5 million in "apparently improper or questionable payments."

On Capitol Hill a measure was introduced last year that would force foundations to pay out more of their endowments than ever before for grants and program activities. Currently foundations must pay out five percent every year, a sum that may include administrative expenses. Under the new legislation the five percent would have to be over and above anything spent on administration—a stipulation that could well see many foundations eventually drawing down their endowments to the point of evaporation. Supporters of the bill declare that at a time when the government can scarcely meet its obligations, the nonprofit sector must step up as never before. One prominent critic of foundations, Georgetown University's Pablo Eisenberg, told *The New York Times*, "Foundations are acting like investment bankers and not grant makers. They have no sense of responsibility to communities at a time when government funding and private funding are being cut."

Meanwhile, attacks on the foundation world for reasons of class or ideology are mounting. *The Wall Street Journal* recently inveighed against the Pew Charitable Trusts for departing from the very conservative social instincts of the donors (the children of an oil baron) who founded the institution half a century ago. "Looks to us as though someone on the Senate Finance or House Government Reform Committees hasn't been minding the store," the *Journal* concluded. The

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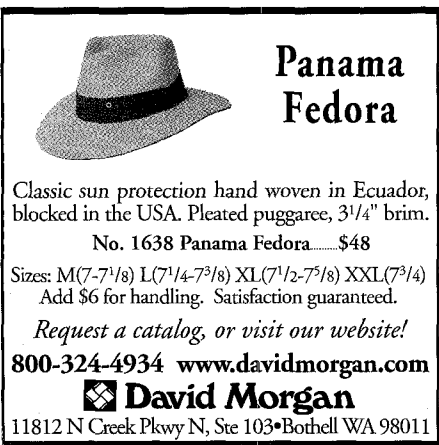
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American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, helps maintain a list of the most activist nonprofit groups in the United States and worldwide (it's on the Web at www.ngowatch.org) and monitors what these groups are up to. A recent conference on the subject at AEI (itself a nonprofit group) was titled "We're Not from the Government, but We're Here to Help You: ... The Growing Power of an Unelected Few." The chair of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, Teresa Odendahl, recently told *The Boston Globe* that "the giving of the wealthy perpetuates the status quo and actually serves their class interest."

Powerful institutions engorged with property and treasure, and accountable to shadowy boards of private overseers. Their riches unavailable to a needy central government. Their avowed convictions largely at odds with those of the ruling party. Their reputations tarnished by accusations of corruption and high living. Their astonishing breadth of good works hanging in the balance.

The situation calls to mind a historical parallel—imperfect, yes, but suggestive all the same. Turn back the clock to England in the 1530s. Angered by the Pope's refusal to grant him a divorce so that he could marry Anne Boleyn, King Henry VIII has broken with Rome and installed himself as the head of an independent Church of England. His Lord Chancellor, Thomas More, has been executed, and replaced at the King's side by Thomas Cromwell, whose finest hours will prove to be those spent sitting for the portrait by Holbein that now hangs in the Frick Collection in New York. Henry desperately needs money, and in casting about for likely sources Cromwell's eyes alight on England's many hundreds of monasteries. They are beyond the King's control, and their commitment to Henry's new religious regime is deeply suspect; indeed, they are sometimes called "the standing army of Rome." Many of the abbots are effectively feudal barons, living lives inconspicuous for ascetic rigor or personal sanctity. To be sure, the monastic foundations have a positive side. They run schools and hospitals and orphanages. The books and manuscripts in their libraries

are an unsurpassed cultural resource.

The monasteries proved an irresistible target, and the undeniable corruption of some establishments provided a convenient official pretext. And so, in 1536, armed with an act of Parliament aimed at rooting out "manifest sin, vicious, carnal and abominable living," Thomas Cromwell undertook their dissolution. There was popular protest—a serious rebellion called the Pilgrimage of Grace—but it was ultimately put down. By 1540 no monasteries were left in England. The lands and other assets of the monastic foundations were confiscated by the King, and over time were sold off to cover his deficits. The roofs of the buildings were stripped for lead, the walls were demolished, and whole libraries of books and manuscripts were lost or burned or shredded for use in latrines. This was the source of the image evoked by Shakespeare of "bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang." The historian Norman Davies writes in his book *The Isles*, "The Act for the Dissolution of the Monasteries ... abolished a few nests of corruption together with the greatest network of social and educational welfare that England had ever known."

It is far-fetched, of course, to think that the modern nonprofit sector must look forward to precisely the same destiny. The bill in Congress that would increase the payout rate has stalled. The unhappy fate that befell the last abbot of Clastonbury, who was drawn and quartered, surely does not await any future president of the Ford Foundation. We have golden parachutes now.

But some steps toward reform could well be taken. For instance, we might consider reviving a practice devised by Thomas Cromwell, who sent "visitors" to England's monasteries to assess the state of their holiness and administration. Of course, Cromwell's men were looking for trouble, and their reports were highly suspect. But given the concern about regulation, perhaps a squad of open-minded visitors could be found to supplement the existing oversight activity, in America or elsewhere. I myself would volunteer to assess the situation at Ditchley Park. I promise to look long and hard. ▀

Cullen Murphy is *The Atlantic's* managing editor.



FOOD

GOING WITH THE GRAIN

True wild rice, for the past twenty years nearly impossible to find, is slowly being nurtured back to market

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

Last summer, just before the wild-rice harvest, I drove east from the Fargo, North Dakota, airport into the rolling green landscape of northern Minnesota—Lake Wobegon country, and beautiful enough to make me want to stay much longer than I'd planned. I was headed for the offices of the White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP), a Native American organization that has several goals. One is to halt all scientific research on wild rice. Another is to market true wild rice, harvested on lakes by hand and processed traditionally, as a way of helping members of the White Earth tribe—best known as Chippewa, now written as Ojibwe—support themselves over the winter. I was hoping to help harvest it myself, but I visited too early. This, I realized when I learned how very tricky the harvest process is, was perhaps for the best. My visit did bear fruit, though: not

only a richer understanding of what seemed an inexplicable campaign but also a source for my favorite native grain.

True wild rice has always been an expensive, hard-to-find delicacy—and a genuine North American one, being native to the lakes of northern Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin and Canada. The real thing became nearly impossible to find starting in the mid-1980s, when paddy-grown and industrially processed wild rice began to flood the market. Most of the Native Americans still hoping to sell wild rice were put out of business by much cheaper—and inferior-tasting—rice.

I enjoy and appreciate many kinds of *Oryza sativa*, the family of white and brown rices, but I would always choose wild rice over them. Its crunch, elegant length, and nutty and grainy though not domineering flavor are incomparable. An aquatic grass only distantly related to

white rice, wild rice is also far more nutritious than white or even brown rice—much higher in protein and minerals, and lower in carbohydrates. Unfortunately, what most people think of as wild rice is far from wild, and its flavor is dull.

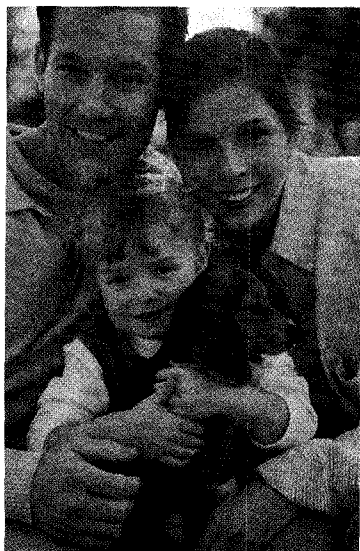
Everything about true wild rice is endangered: the indigenous varieties, the environments they need to flourish, the way of life that long drew Ojibwe families to lakeside camps in late summer for a harvest nourishing in many ways. The WELRP is fighting to save all of it. Several tenets of its fight are polemical and undeniably quixotic. Several products of it are practical, admirable, and very good with fish (wild, and preferably from a rice lake).

The timing of the fight is auspicious, because so much is left to save. The domestication of wild rice began extremely recently—a matter of decades ago (corn, by comparison, was domesticated thousands of years ago). Researchers started trying to tame wild rice in the early 1950s, but the real trouble, as the Ojibwe see it, began in 1977, when Minnesota named it the state grain. Perhaps millions of state-university dollars were put into research on strains of wild rice that could be cultivated commercially in paddies. The traits researchers bred for were not, of course, nutty flavor and firm yet lightly pliable texture—aesthetic concerns seldom play a role in industrial hybridization—but uniform maturation and ease of harvest.

Neither the summer ritual that brings families together nor the rice, which grows along lakesides and in some rivers, is amenable to industrialization. Hand-harvesters travel in pairs in canoes, beating the stalks with “ricing” poles to knock seeds onto the canoe bottoms. Ari Weinzwieg, the author of the new *Zingerman's Guide to Good Eating*, describes his lame and sweaty attempt to go ricing: trying to balance while pulling the stalks over the edge of the canoe, unsuccessfully dodging the sharp husks that another ricer told him “stick in you like spears” and can cause eye injuries. At the end of one hot, humid, buggy day he had a paltry bag of rice to show for his efforts, and a new appreciation for

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the endurance and skill of the tribal members who accompanied him. "I can assure you," he writes, "that whatever price you and I pay for wild rice, we've got the easy end of the deal."

The very rigor of ricing leads to satisfaction for the hardy hunter—a satisfaction not limited to Native Americans. "You go outside and have fun and get something out of it," James Meeker, a professor of biology and natural resources at Northland College, in Ashland, Wisconsin, who has studied wild rice, recently told me. "I'm tired, it's hot, and you get sunburned," he added. But he and his wife go ricing every summer, and keep the results of their work in glass jars in their basement, dipping into them when they want to eat well.

The growing cycle is yet more inefficient than the harvest. Agribusinesses, naturally, wanted to improve it. In any year as much as half the crop is lost to wind and gravity, as plants drop their ripe seeds to the water bottom; this re-seeding is essential, because wild rice is an annual rather than a perennial crop. Some varieties, however, have evolved to hold their seed much longer; it is this "non-shattering" trait that industry sought, along with uniform ripening on a single stalk over just a few days rather than the usual ten to fourteen. In 1998 and 1999 Nor-Cal Wild Rice, a California company, won two patents related to producing sterile plants—a development that disturbed Ojibwe members.

Minnesota's investment paid off at first, at least for state agribusinesses. But by 1986 it had backfired. Domestication decimated those businesses as well as the Ojibwe harvesters they had displaced. The farmers of rice paddies created from California farmland and pastures, who were being paid by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to limit their production of ordinary rice, realized they could grow and harvest the newly domesticated wild rice just as easily. Their large paddies and extended growing season gave them an advantage over Minnesotans, and soon California was producing nearly twice as much rice as Minnesota. Today more than 95 percent of the country's wild rice is paddy-grown, with production

centered in California. Wild rice appears in a range of products Minnesota could only have dreamed of in the early paddy days: upscale TV dinners, soup mixes, rice medleys with rices distinguishable solely by color and not by taste.

The White Earth activists I met in their makeshift, busy headquarters believe they are among the first North Americans to champion a cause dear to anti-globalists everywhere. Indigenous peoples have long lamented the incursion of agri-industry into rain forests, deserts, and other species-rich territories, arguing that native plants are the property of humanity and, specifically, of the people who use them to heal and nourish themselves. The WELRP holds that wild rice is a sacred gift, and that scientific intrusion is sacrilege. Wild rice—*manoomin*—is central to the Ojibwe creation stories. The Ojibwe believe that their prophecies directed them to settle “where the good berry grows on water.” *Manoomin* meant sustenance, spiritual identity, and economic power.

For at least a hundred years Americans have been diminishing the environment suited to wild rice. Wild rice is a bellwether crop, one that demands certain conditions—specific water-level ranges; clear-flowing rather than sediment-filled water—and yet is resilient in the face of storms and floods. In fact it requires them, to drive away perennial competitors that could otherwise take hold in its habitat, as Donald Waller, a conservation biologist at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, explained to me. “Natural changes in water level from year to year are crucial to giving wild rice the edge,” he said. Those changes have been artificially stabilized by dams, which as early as the nineteenth century began to reduce the prevalence of wild rice. Today motor-boaters—politically potent lake lovers—insist on steady water levels, the better for their docks. Strong wakes frequently destroy nascent wild-rice plants that are invisible below the surface. Boats plough through the ribbonlike floating leaves that signal wild rice at its most critical and vulnerable stage, before the stalks grow upright. Motor blades trail

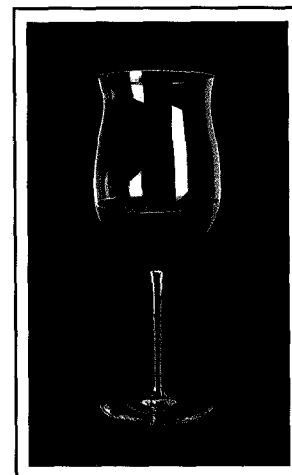
foreign plant material that can take root and compete with the rice.

Ojibwe members of the WELRP have lined up behind the banner of its plain-spoken activist founder, Winona LaDuke (Ralph Nader’s partner on the Green ticket in the 2000 presidential election), a West Coast-raised and Harvard-educated woman whose father was descended from White Earth tribal members. Her goal is to end further research into sacred Indian property and to save “Our Manoomin, Our Life,” as she put it in the title of a 2003 booklet she wrote with Brian Carlson, a WELRP colleague. LaDuke points with alarm to reports that Australian researchers at Southern Cross University, in Lismore, NSW, are inserting genetic material from wild rice into white rice. Should any genetically engineered wild-rice varieties actually be created and planted in the vicinity of natural stands, she says, disasters could occur along the lines of the irretrievable intermixing of Mexican corn with genetically modified corn. Already the WELRP is upset about the proximity of industrial Minnesota paddies to natural stands of wild rice, and the potential dominance of hybrids in lakes where other varieties evolved naturally.

The WELRP has made little headway in stopping scientific research, despite a stream of letters to the University of Minnesota. And the organization is unlikely to get much further. “Research is not good or bad,” Donald Waller says, representing the scientific community. “It’s the purposes to which it’s put” that count. After filing suit against a division of Anheuser-Busch for putting pictures of Indians in canoes on packages of California paddy rice (the case was settled out of court), the Ojibwe did achieve the passage of a law requiring industrial producers in Minnesota to use the word “paddy” on their packaging. If a similar law were imposed on California producers, recognizing true wild rice would become much easier.

When I visited the WELRP’s offices, next to a model fruit-and-vegetable garden and across from a lake where in a few weeks ricing would begin, the idealistic staff, some working as undergraduate interns or just out of college,

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described various WELRP programs to me. One is Mino-Muijim, in which wild rice and other traditional foods, such as hominy and buffalo meat, are delivered each month to elder White Earth members suffering from Type 2 diabetes—a disease that has devastated Native Americans (who are genetically susceptible to it), probably because they have switched from traditional diets low in fat and high in fiber to typical fast-food-heavy American diets. The program was begun by LaDuke and Margaret Smith, a determined eighty-five-year-old former teacher; Smith, who has diabetes, felt better after returning to native foods, and she wanted to provide both companionship and better nutrition to tribal members who live alone and rely on highly processed, government-subsidized food. “Oh,” a tribal member exclaimed to one WELRP intern who accompanied Smith on her monthly delivery route, “here come the good commodities.”

In 1996 LaDuke began Native Harvest, a company to market White Earth products—chiefly wild rice, but also crafts such as baskets and beadwork. Native Harvest has just finished work on a facility that will be better able to process and sell the wild rice harvested by White Earth members. You can order the handsome packages of firm, even, beautifully long rice online (the Web site is www.welrp.org); and Zingerman's sells “really wild wild rice” that is hand-harvested on lakes by members of other tribes. Price is one sure indication of authenticity: true wild rice generally costs at least \$8.00 a pound. Color is another: paddy rice is charcoal-gray, true wild rice a mottled beige-brown. Cooking time is different too; paddy rice usually requires twice as much.

Processing has a marked effect on flavor. Green rice must be parched, to slow biological processes and shrink the grain from the husk. Parching on reservations is now done in drums rotating over a flame—usually gas but sometimes wood, which imparts smoky undertones. Then the grain must be removed from the husk, which is done in another rotating drum, with paddles. This used to be accomplished by tread-

ing, or “jigging” on the grain; now the process is strictly mechanical. All tribal wild-rice processors have their own techniques and tricks for parching, threshing, and winnowing, but their rice, prepared in single small batches, always tastes more interesting than anything processed on an industrial scale.

Cooking wild rice is easy. To serve four people, simmer one cup of rice in four to five cups of salted water or broth until the grains burst and have only a hint of hardness—at least twenty and usually thirty minutes. I prefer to eat wild rice plain, so as to fully enjoy a range of flavors that always comes as a surprise to me. (Native Harvest's rice is the freshest and fullest flavored I've tried.)

But others may prefer it as part of a dish. In his new book Weinzwieg offers a recipe for wild-rice soup, a traditional use. It's easy to make, and calls for vegetables that are available in the early spring, when anything fresh and local is a tantalizing six weeks away.

To make four to six servings, cook half a cup of wild rice in about two and a quarter cups of water until soft—about thirty minutes. In a large pot melt two tablespoons of butter over medium heat. Add two cups of washed and chopped leeks (all the white and some of the lighter-green portions), and sauté until wilted—about seven minutes. Add three quarters of a cup of chopped celery (one large stalk), a tablespoon of chopped flat-leaf parsley, and one smashed, peeled, and minced garlic clove, and sauté for two more minutes. Pour in five cups of low-sodium chicken broth and stir well. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and add three cups of cubed potatoes, peeled or not, and one cup of roughly chopped parsnips. Simmer for about twenty minutes, until the potatoes are very tender. Let the soup cool a bit, and puree it in a blender or a food processor. Combine with the cooked wild rice and heat to serving temperature. I usually find soups vastly more interesting when they're chunky; but in this case I can advocate a mild-seeming purée, to serve as a smooth, lush backdrop. True wild rice should always be the star, not the chorus. ▀

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic.



FICTION

FOALING SEASON

We could dress Sheila Altman in my sister's clothes and sell her my sister's horse, but what could she understand about the way things worked?

BY ARYN KYLE

.....

Six months before Polly Cain drowned in the canal, my sister, Nona, ran off and married a cowboy. My father said there was a time when he would have been able to stop her, and I wasn't sure if he meant a time in our lives when she would have listened to him, or a time in history when the Desert Valley Sheriff's Posse would have been allowed to chase after her with torches and drag her back to our house by her yellow hair. He had been a member of the sheriff's posse since before I was born, and he said that the group was pretty much the same as the Masons, except without the virgin sacrifices. They paid dues, rode their horses in parades, and directed traffic at the rodeo where my sister first laid eyes on her cowboy. Only once in a great while were they called upon for a task of real importance, like clearing a fallen tree from a hunting trail, or pulling a dead girl out of the canal.

Polly Cain disappeared on a Wednesday afternoon, and at first people were

talking kidnapping. An eleven-year-old girl was too young to be a runaway, so they figured someone must have snatched her. But then they found her backpack on the dirt road that ran alongside the canal, and soon they called my father. For the two days the sheriff's posse dragged the canal, they traded in their white tuxedo shirts and black-felt Stetsons for rubber waders that came up to their armpits, and they walked shoulder to shoulder through the brown water. I passed them on my way home from school. It was only April, but already the mayflies were starting to hatch off the water, and I watched my father swat them away from his face. I waved and called to him from the side of the canal, but he clenched his jaw and didn't look at me.

"We found that girl today," he said when he came home the next afternoon. I was making Kool-Aid in a plastic pitcher, and he stuck his finger in and then licked it. "Tangled in one of the grates."

"Is she dead?" I asked, and he stared at me.

"You stay away from that canal when you're walking home, Alice," he said.

"Will there be a funeral?" I pictured myself like a woman in the movies, standing beside the grave in a black dress and thick sunglasses, too sad to cry.

"What do you care?"

"We were partners in shop class. We were making a lantern." The truth was that Polly had been making the lantern while I watched. She had been a good sport about the whole thing and let me hold it when our teacher, Mr. McClusky, walked by, so that he would think I was doing some of the work.

"I don't have time to take you to a funeral, Alice," my father said, and he put his hand on top of my head. "There's just too much work around here. I've already lost two days."

I nodded and stirred the Kool-Aid with a wooden spoon. There was always too much work. My father owned a stable. Between posse meetings he gave

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riding lessons and bred and raised horses, which he sold to people who fed them apple slices by hand and called them "baby." In the mornings my father and I fed the horses while it was still dark, and I would walk to school shaking hay from my hair and clothing, scratching at the pieces that had fallen down the front of my shirt. In the afternoons we cleaned the stalls and groomed and exercised the horses. It was foaling season, and Dad didn't like to leave the barn even for a minute, in case one of our mares went into labor. It was just as well. I didn't have a black dress.

"You've been a trooper, kid," he said. "When your sister comes back, things will calm down."

He always did this—talked about how my sister would come home and everything would be the way it was. For a while I'd wondered if he might be right. It had all happened so fast. Nona met Jerry on a Sunday, and on Thursday she packed four boxes and a backpack and went off in his pickup truck. Jerry rode broncs on the rodeo circuit and married my sister at a courthouse in Kansas. My father said that Jerry would break his spine riding broncs, and Nona would spend the rest of her life pushing him around in a wheelchair and holding a cup for him to drool into. She wasn't the marrying kind, my father said. She wouldn't be satisfied to spend her life on the outside of an arena, cheering for someone else.

But the months had passed by, and Nona's letters were still filled with smiley faces and exclamation points. Compared with the horse-show circuit, she wrote, rodeos were a dream. She and Jerry ate steak for dinner and slept in motels, which was a big step up from horse shows, where we ate granola bars and drank soda pop and slept in the stalls with the horses so that no one could steal them during the night.

Her letters were always addressed to me. They opened with "Baby Alice," and closed with "Give my love to Mom and Dad." I would leave the letters on the counter for my father to read, which he hardly ever did, and after a few days I would go up to my mother's room and read the letters aloud to her.

My mother had spent nearly my

whole life in her bedroom. Nona said that before we came along, our mother had been a star in horse shows, had won left and right, and even had her picture in the paper. She said that one day, when I was still a baby, our mother had handed me to her, said she was tired, and gone upstairs to rest. She never came back down. Dad moved into the guest bedroom so as not to disrupt her, and we were careful to take our shoes off when we walked past her room. She didn't make much of a fuss. She didn't call for extra blankets or crushed ice or quiet. She just stayed in bed with the curtains drawn and watched television without the sound. It was easy to forget she was there.

I would sit on her bed and read Nona's letters to her by the blue light of the TV screen, and she would pat my leg and say, "Real nice. It sounds real nice, doesn't it, Alice?"

I would breathe through my mouth to filter the sour, damp scent of her yellow skin and oily hair. My mother made me say the name of the town each letter had come from, and what I thought it looked like. I pictured the rodeo towns as dry, dusty places with dirty motels and lines of fast-food restaurants, but I tried to be inventive: McCook, Nebraska, had chestnut trees lining every street; Marion, Illinois, had purple sunsets; and Sikeston, Missouri, had a park with a pond in the middle where people could feed ducks. When I couldn't think anymore, I would say that I had to go to the bathroom or that I had to help Dad in the barn, and I would creep out of her bedroom and shut the door behind me.

After Nona left, my father said, we were lucky to get Sheila Altman. She lived on the other side of Desert Valley and went to a new school with computers and air-conditioning. Sheila Altman had green eyes and a soft voice. She said "If I might" and "Would you mind," and never forgot to say "Please" and "Thank you." I wanted to rip her baby-fine hair out in tufts. When her mother drove her to our house, Sheila would rush into the stable to kiss the horses and feed them carrots she had brought from home. Mrs. Altman would get out of the car with her camera and checkbook and watch her daughter scramble into the barn. "Well,

Mr. Winston," she would say, "you've got your work cut out for you today."

Mrs. Altman had told my father that for the past few years she had spent thousands of dollars to send Sheila to equestrian camp, where for one week she got to care for a horse as if it were her own, feeding it, grooming it, and cleaning its stall. My father had jokingly said that he would let Sheila clean his stalls for half that, but when Mrs. Altman gasped and said "Really?," he didn't falter.

"For *this* girl?" he said. "Absolutely." After that Mrs. Altman drove Sheila across the valley every day after school and paid my father to let her groom our horses and muck out our stalls. While Sheila was there, my father was chipper and lighthearted. He told her what a hard worker she was and said he didn't know how we had managed without her. After she was gone, he would rub my back and say, "You give that girl anything she wants, Alice. Talk nice to her. Sheila Altman is our meal ticket. And she doesn't have attitude, like your sister."

My father had always said that Nona had a wicked tongue and an ungrateful heart, but he usually smiled when he said it. She threw fits like nobody's business. When she was thirsty, she shrieked. When she was hot, she cried. And when she was mad at my father, her face would get so tight and rigid that it looked like it might split apart right between her eyes.

My father was being kind when he said I didn't have the temperament for showing, because what he meant was that I didn't have the talent. I couldn't remember to smile and keep my heels down and my toes in and my elbows tight and my back straight all at the same time. When I focused on smiling, I dropped my reins, and when I thought about sitting up straight, my feet slipped out of the stirrups. My father said that he needed me more outside the ring anyway, but I saw how it was. We had a reputation to maintain and a livelihood to earn. In the end, I wasn't good for business.

But Nona had been good enough for both of us. She smiled and laughed and winked at the judges. Outside the ring she would let little girls from the stands sit on her horse. While she showed them how to hold the reins and where to put their feet, she would aim her voice at

JOHN CHRISTIAN

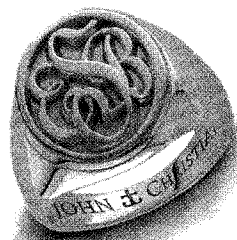
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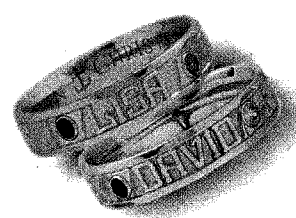
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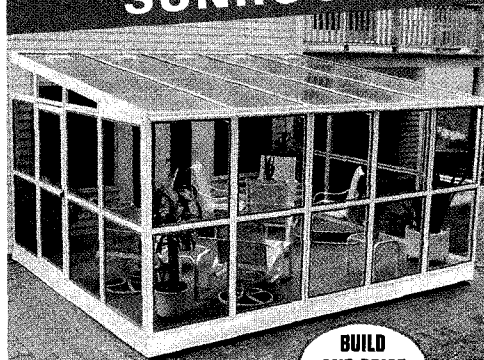
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their parents and say, "You're a natural!" Then she would flash her smile at the mother and say, "My daddy gives lessons. You all should come out sometime."

Yellow Cap was the last horse my father bought for her. He was a palomino—the flashiest, biggest, most beautiful animal in the ring. The first time I saw him, I thought he would kill my sister for sure, but Nona mounted him easily. She jiggled the reins and said, "There's my boy." Yellow Cap's neck arched, and his body tucked, and they rode around the arena like they were under a spotlight. My father watched from the sidelines with some prospective clients and said, "That horse would walk on water if she asked him to."

The day after Polly was pulled from the canal, we didn't have shop class. Instead the whole sixth grade was taken into the gymnasium and invited to pray if we wanted to. Then we were told to go home and talk with our parents about what we were feeling.

When I got to my house, Mrs. Altman and my father were gathered around Sheila, who was wearing my sister's show clothes.

"I don't know," Mrs. Altman was saying. "I'm not sure about the color."

"I was just thinking that," my father told her. "I was just thinking the same thing about the color."

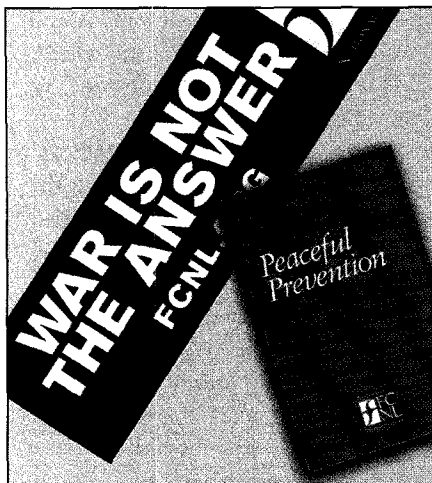
"She looks better in red," Mrs. Altman made a circular motion with her finger, and Sheila gave me a shy smile as she turned around to let her mother see the back.

"We have a red shirt," my father said. "Alice, go up to Nona's room and get the red shirt." Sheila stared down at the pavement, and I dropped my backpack and went into the house.

I had to pick my way between piles of ribbons and trophies to get to the closet, and when I opened it, Nona's smell was gone from the clothes. I pushed my face into the different fabrics, trying to find a trace of her, the sweet, powdery scent of her deodorant, the fruity smell of her lotion, but there was nothing.

My mother's door was open a crack when I passed it, with the red shirt still on its hanger.

"Alice, is that you?"



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I creaked the door open and braced myself against the wave of stale air. My mother was propped up on three pillows, and the TV light flickered across her face. I arranged my feet in the doorway, careful not to let them cross the line where the hallway carpet changed into the bedroom carpet.

"Be my good girl and close the window." She tossed her pale hand limply at the wrist and sighed heavily. "Those little white bugs are coming in. I'm afraid they'll bite me in my sleep."

"Mayflies don't bite, Mom," I said, but I crossed the room to close the window.

"I hate them," she said. "Filthy things. Off that horrible water."

In the blue glow of the TV the mayflies looked gray and sickly, and I tried to fan them out the window. I could feel my mother's stare on the back of my neck. "Would you like to stay and tell me what you learned in school today?" She patted the bed beside her.

I held up the red shirt. "I have to take this to Dad."

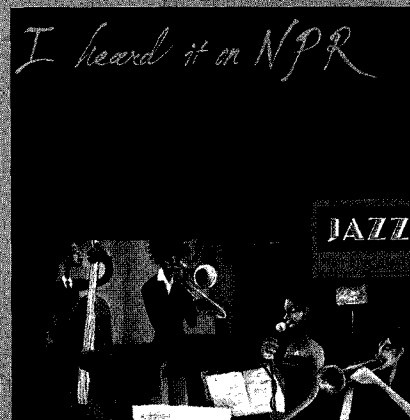
She blinked at me for a second and then looked back at the television. "Better hurry, then."

Sheila really did look much better in red, and my father sold Nona's shirt to Mrs. Altman for twice what he had paid for it.

In shop class I didn't know what to do with the half-finished lantern. I was afraid to weld, and I didn't think I could tape the pieces together. But the boys couldn't get enough of welding, and several of them bid for the chance to finish the lantern for me. In the end I accepted an offer of three dollars and a Pepsi, and then watched while they pieced my lantern together.

Mr. McClusky told me that it would be a nice gesture to give the lantern to Polly's mother, and after school I practiced what I might say when I rang Polly's doorbell. I had barely known Polly and had never met her mother, but such a heartfelt gesture would probably make her cry. Maybe she would ask me to stay and visit. She would make me tea and feed me gingersnaps while she ran her fingers through my hair. "Come back anytime," she would say. "Stay the night if you want."

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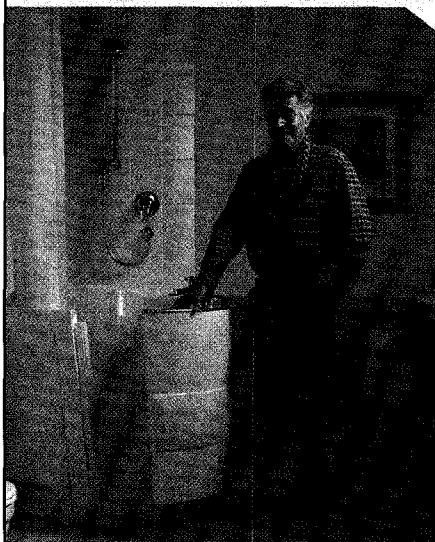
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But while I was practicing the right way to make my gesture, I noticed the places on the lantern where I had smudged the paint by touching it to see if it was dry. Polly's mother probably had rooms full of perfect things Polly had made over the years: neatly sewn beanbags from home ec, symmetrical clay pencil holders from art, the kinds of things that when I made them always came out crooked or lumpy. Giving her a crummy lantern would only confuse her. Instead of taking it to Polly's house I wrapped the lantern in notebook paper and put it in my backpack. I walked home along the canal, sipping my Pepsi and wishing I had let the boys paint my lantern too.

My father was sitting in front of the barn, polishing Nona's show saddle, when I got home. His face was red, and the skin around his lips looked tight and drawn. "Your mother's been crying all day," he said when he saw me. "Where have you been?"

"At school, like I always am."

"Don't you use that tone with me."

I stared at my feet.

"Now you go upstairs and be sweet to your mother. Tell her how much you love her. Make her feel special. Then come back and help me. There's a million things to do. I'm sick of doing all the work around here."

I looked at him. Nona wasn't coming back. Not ever. "Maybe Sheila Altman can do it when she gets here."

My father stood up then, and he seemed bigger than any human being had ever been. For a second I thought he might hit me, and I tried to gauge the distance to the house. I might be able to outrun him. But then he put his hands up to his face, and his shoulders sagged. "Please, Alice," he said through his fingers. "Please."

Upstairs, my mother's face was streaked, and strands of her hair clung to the damp patches on her cheeks.

"Why are you crying, Mom?" I asked from the doorway. I meant for it to sound sweet, but it came out tired. "Are you sick?"

She let out a cry when she saw me. "Come here to me." Every part of my body went stiff, but I thought of my father with his face in his hands, and I held my breath as I crossed the room to her.

She pulled me into the bed with her and pressed my head against her shoulder.

"He sent you up here, didn't he? I've been a nuisance today."

"Dad's worried about you," I told her.

Her hair fell across my face, and I tried to lift my head to breathe. "I used to be able to make him smile," she whispered. "He used to look at me like I was a movie star. Do you believe that?" She sighed and straightened herself. Then she bit her lip and looked down at her hands. "She was smart," she said quietly. "Smart to leave when she did."

I didn't know what to say.

"She would have been used up here. She would be old fast, and used up. And now she gets to travel to new places and meet new people." She turned her head away from me.

Her nightgown was wrinkled, and in the light of the television her skin looked dull and heavy. "I made you something," I told her. "In school."

"You did?" Her mouth opened and she touched her hand to her chest. "Really truly?"

I rummaged in my backpack. "It's a lantern," I said. "See? You put a candle here and then you can hang it and it will light your room."

My mother gasped as I handed it to her. She touched her fingers along the welded edges and the paint-smeared center. "You made this? For me?"

"Uh huh."

"Oh, baby," she said, and hugged me. "You and I will take care of each other, won't we?"

I stood up and backed to the door. "I have to go help in the barn now. Dad said."

Outside, Mrs. Altman was writing a check to my father. When I came up beside him, he raised his eyebrows at me, and I nodded. "She's fine," I said, and he sighed.

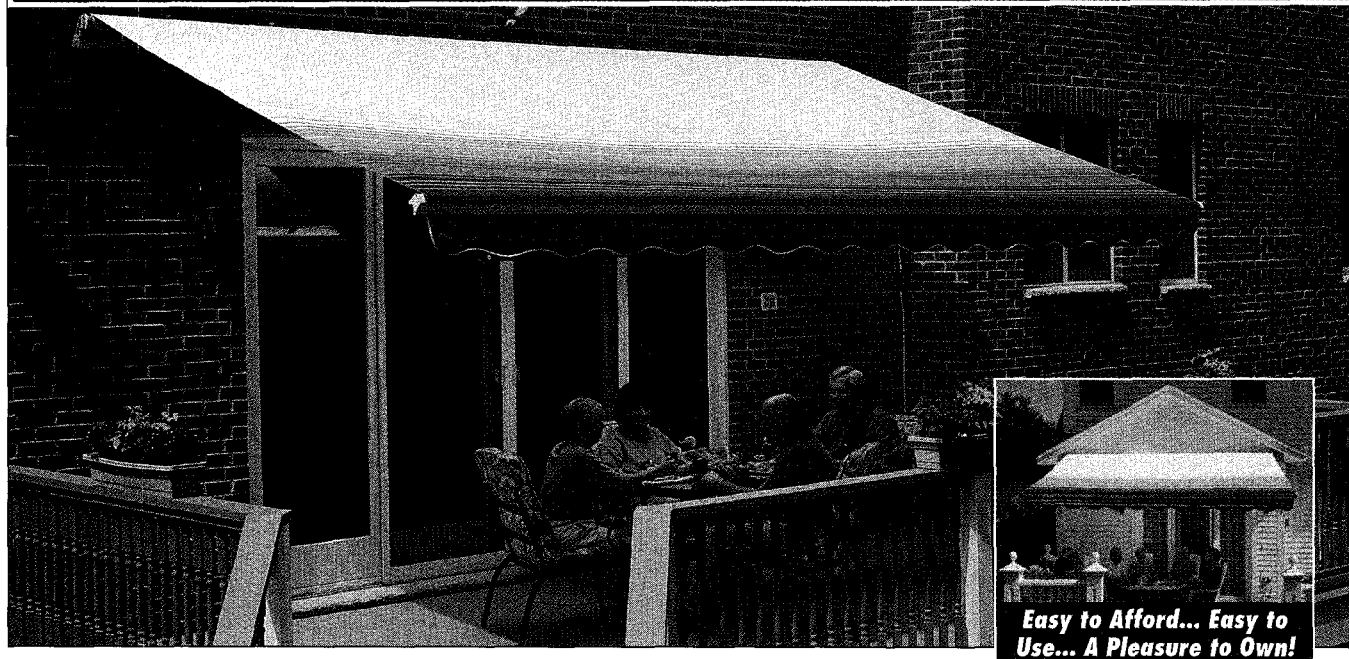
"Who?" Mrs. Altman asked with a bright smile. "Mrs. Winston?" My father and I glanced at each other. "I'd love to meet her."

"My wife keeps to herself," my father said awkwardly, his eyes on the check.

"She's sick," I added, and they both looked at me.

"With what?" Mrs. Altman glanced at my father.

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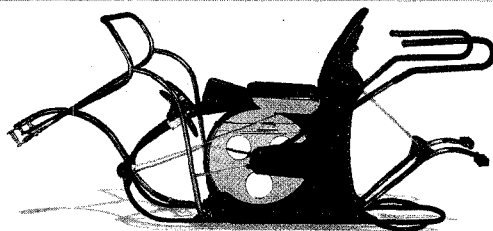
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"She has an allergy to the sun," I said. "And to fresh air." My father opened his mouth slightly.

"How awful!" Mrs. Altman said. "What happens to her?"

"Her head gets big," I said. They both stared. "And she gets hives. And fevers. And sometimes she faints." My father nudged me.

Mrs. Altman clasped her hands. "That's dreadful," she said. "The poor thing!"

After she handed over the check and followed her daughter into the barn, my father gave me a searching look. "You're a wicked lying fiend, Alice Winston," he said. But he smiled when he said it.

Sheila Altman helped us clear the show horses out of the barn to make room for the broodmares, who got to live indoors when they birthed. While we brought the pregnant mares in from the pasture, Sheila squealed and clapped her hands.

"I can't wait for the babies!" she said to me.

Our broodmares had simple names like Misty, Lucy, Ginger, and Sally. They were slow and quiet, with long heads, matted manes, and misshapen stomachs. Sheila put her hands on the mares' barrel stomachs and said she could feel the foals moving inside.

"It kicked!" she told me. "I swear I felt it kick."

After she left, I took Cap from his pen and tried to brush the snarls from his mane and tail. My father watched, and as I pulled the loose hair from the brush and let it fall on the ground, he cleared his throat.

"Mrs. Altman wants to buy Cap for Sheila," he said.

I felt my fingertips go cold, and I pretended to clean more hair from the brush. "He's too much horse for her."

My father picked an invisible piece of lint off his shirt. "You want to show this year?"

I stared at him.

"Then keep your opinions to yourself!"

Polly Cain's funeral was to begin at five o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, at the cemetery across from the water slide. When I got home from school, I practiced looking sad and remorseful

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in the mirror. Maybe my father would change his mind and take me, and then Polly's mother would pick me out of the crowd as someone who had been close to Polly. I would walk slowly up to her and let her pull me against her body. As I stared at myself in the mirror, I imagined the afternoons I would spend sitting with Polly's mother at her kitchen table, with photo albums spread before us. She would point out pictures of Polly in Halloween costumes and at piano recitals. "See?" she would say. "See how much you look like her?" I would lean my head against her shoulder, and her hair would smell like strawberries and lemons. I would tell her how much I missed Polly, how nothing would ever be the same now that she was gone, and she would kiss my eyelids and fingers and cry into the palms of my hands. "She was my best friend in the world," I would say. And maybe it wouldn't be a real lie. No one could prove she wasn't my best friend. She was dead, after all.

But before I could persuade my father to take me, our mare Lucy gave birth to the first foal of the year, and I knew that I would not be at the cemetery to pay my last respects. I helped my father wrap Lucy's tail with an Ace bandage, so that the foal wouldn't get tangled in it. We moved around the mare on our knees, clearing the sawdust away from her legs to keep it from clogging the foal's nostrils. The foal came out, thin and wet, breaking the fetal sac open with its weak white hooves.

"It's a colt," my father said, grinning. "Look at him." I pressed myself across the colt's body to keep him still while my father cut the umbilical cord, and then we watched him try to stand on his tiny, pointed feet.

My father cupped the back of my head in his hand. "You did good, Alice," he said. "You're a pro." We waited in the stall doorway until the colt was balanced on his trembling legs. For a second we felt as if we had made something happen.

When we heard the Altmans' minivan pull up in the driveway, my father closed his eyes and said, "Christ, I don't have the energy for this today."

Mrs. Altman got out of the car and began examining the grille. "There are tiny white insects all over the place," she

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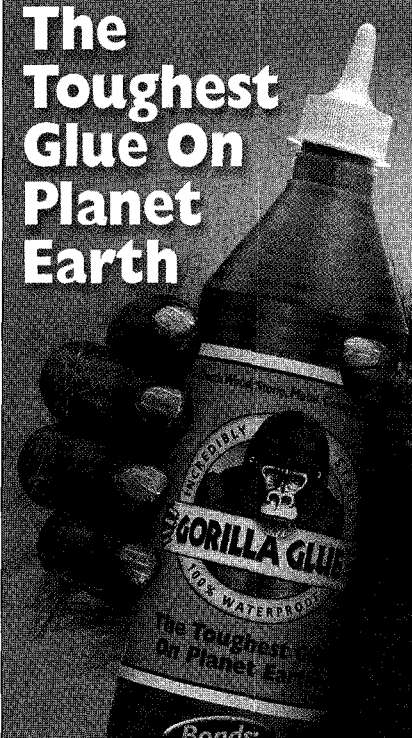
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told us. "Their little corpses are stuck all over my car."

My father shook his head at me and then walked over to look. "Mayflies," he announced. "They hatch off the canals. We found about a hundred of them stuck in that girl's hair when we pulled her out of the water."

Mrs. Altman had taken a towel from the back seat and was trying to wipe the front of her car. "Down the road it almost looks like it's snowing, there are so many of them." She looked at me and stopped. "My God, Alice. What's happened?"

I glanced down and saw that my T-shirt was stained with blood where I had leaned against the colt.

"We got our first foal this afternoon," my father said, gesturing at the barn.

"I can't believe we missed it," Sheila wailed. "You should have called us!"

My father turned to me and rolled his eyes. "We'll have plenty more," he said.

Sheila and her mother crowded around Lucy's stall and began clicking and cooing at the foal. Lucy bared her teeth and flattened her ears. My father nudged Sheila away. "Let's give them a while to adjust," he said. "The mothers are a little protective at first."

"I can't believe I forgot my camera today," Mrs. Altman said. "What a day to forget."

"We might get another tonight," I said. "They sometimes come right on top of each other."

"Mom, can I stay—please?" Sheila clasped her hands against her chest and rose up on her toes. "If you wouldn't mind, that is," she added, glancing at my father.

In my head I tried to will my father to say no, but he didn't look at me. "She can stay the night," he told Mrs. Altman. "Alice and I will be up all night checking on the mares anyway."

"Oh, please, Mom?" Sheila begged. "It will be like a slumber party."

Mrs. Altman adjusted the fold of her collar. "Tomorrow is a school day, but for something like this—this is a life lesson, and I think that's more important. You'll get to see the miracle of birth. It's the most beautiful thing in the world, isn't it, Alice?"

I wanted to tell her about the blood and the smell and the sound a mare

made when her flesh began to rip around the opening for the foal. I wanted to tell her about our bay mare a few years back, whose uterus had come out when she birthed and hung behind her like a sack of jelly. I wanted to tell her that the bay had screamed a human scream but stood, trembling, to let the foal nurse. I wanted her to know that when the vet had come to put the mare down, Nona covered my eyes, but I could hear the bones crack when she hit the ground. The foal had cried out in its watery whinny for three whole days afterward. But I smiled and said, "Yes. Beautiful."

Mrs. Altman left us money to order pizza and said that she would pick Sheila up in the morning. As she got into her minivan, she asked me if Sheila could borrow clothes so that she wouldn't bloody up her nice ones. I thought about Polly's funeral, just starting across town. Her mother would have taken a seat already. People would be parking their cars and nodding to one another solemnly as they walked across the grass. I had never been to a funeral, but I imagined that everyone would come quietly, dignified and respectful in smart black dresses and stiff suits. They would sit rigid against the pain, but would yield to it as the funeral progressed. Their bodies would soften and then lean into one another, arms circling waists and shoulders, fingers interlacing, as she was lowered into the ground.

We ate our pizza on paper napkins and played gin rummy in the tack room. We took turns walking through the barn to check on the mares, and at two in the morning Sheila came back at a run. "Ginger's lying down!" she shrieked. "She's sweating really bad."

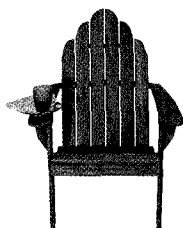
"Here we go," my father said, and we trooped behind him through the barn. My father tossed me an Ace bandage and pointed to Ginger's tail. I knelt behind her and saw that her tail was already wet with clots of blood and mucus. Her muscles rippled across her body, and her back legs pushed into the sawdust.

"You're gonna get kicked," Sheila whispered into her fingers.

"She can't kick if she's lying down, dummy," I told her. My father pinched the back of my arm. "I mean, it's okay."

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I pulled the wet strands of Ginger's tail into the bandage and closed it with a safety pin.

Sheila took a step back and whispered, "Hurry, Alice."

My father knelt beside Ginger's head with his hands on her neck. He stroked her mane and talked in a low voice. "That's my girl," he said. "Come on, sweetheart." Most of the time my father referred to the broodmares as bitches or nags, but while they were birthing he would click his tongue and whisper to them as if they were children. "That's it, love," he purred. "You're okay."

Sheila crept beside my father and began breathing loudly in short breaths, like women on television do when they are in labor.

"You talk to her," he told Sheila, and she leaned down to touch Ginger's muzzle. My father patted her shoulder and added, "Just be careful she doesn't throw her head and knock your teeth out."

I could hear the other horses pacing and pawing at the ground outside. The pens were rattling, and my father told me to go check them. Ginger began to moan, and Sheila backed out of the stall with her hands over her mouth. "I'll come with you," she whispered.

The show mares had gathered around the pasture fence. They were lying on the ground, their eyes rolled back and their bodies foamy with sweat. They lifted their heads and brought them down hard on the grass while they groaned and snorted.

"What's wrong with them?" Sheila said.

"They're trying to birth," I told her, and for a second I thought it could be true.

Her mouth trembled. "But they aren't pregnant."

"They get the smell," I said. "They get the smell of the new foals, and they try to birth." I glanced to see if she believed me. In less than a month the show mares would be back in the barn, clean and clipped and ready for the show season. By then Sheila could be bored with horses, could switch to piano or gymnastics or ice-skating. We could dress Sheila Altman in my sister's clothes and sell her my sister's horse, but what could she understand about

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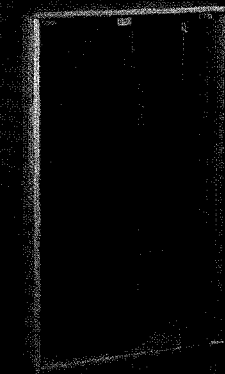
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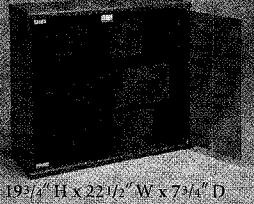
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the way things worked? Sheila Altman —what could she understand about wanting?

Sheila's face froze, and she covered her ears with her hands. I felt a wonderful nastiness rise inside myself. "Isn't it beautiful?"

Sheila shuddered and turned away. "I can't look at them," she said.

Along the driveway the geldings were stomping at the ground and ramming the gates of their pens with their chests. Their heads were wildly high, and the whites of their eyes caught the moonlight. Yellow Cap whinnied, and I ran to his pen while Sheila watched. "It's okay, Cap," I told him.

"He's freaking out," Sheila said nervously. "They're all freaking out."

"He's fine," I told her, and reached out to pet him, but he jumped and pulled away. "Come on, boy," I called, and unlatched the gate to go in with him.

As I slid the gate open, Cap reared up, and his shoulder hit me in the face, knocking me to the ground. I heard the metal gate clang against the pen, and the sound of Cap's hooves on the gravel as he ran toward the road.

"Stop him!" I called to Sheila, but she stared after him without moving. My hip and leg felt rubbery and weak when I stood up, and my hands were shaking as I steadied myself on the fence. "I have to go get him," I told her.

"Alice, your face is bleeding," she said. I could taste blood and dirt between my teeth, and I touched my hand to my mouth. I couldn't tell what was bleeding. My whole face felt numb.

"He could get hit by a car," I said.

"He went toward the canal. We should get your dad."

I pushed past her, and she grabbed my hand. "We could tell him that I let Cap out. He won't get mad at me, I don't think. Or we could get your mom." I looked at her. "It's night, so maybe she could come outside. Come on, Alice, you're bleeding bad. Let me come with you."

The only thing that could get me in more trouble than losing Cap was losing Sheila Altman. Her mouth puckered as if she was about to cry, and I shook my hand away from her. "I'll be right back, Sheila. Don't be a baby."

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I ran until I thought my lungs were going to rise up into my mouth. I tripped twice along the side of the road. When I had to slow down, I called for Cap and clicked my tongue. My nose was running, and I walked to the sound of my breath heaving. I wiped my nose with the back of my hand and rubbed the raw sting in my elbow where I had scraped it when I tripped. The mayflies were floating in front of me, and I waved my arms to push them away. Up ahead I could just make out where the canal water should have been, but there was a glimmering fog over it: the bugs were rising off the canal by the millions, their snowflake bodies and paper wings a blizzard over the water. I started along the dirt road but had gone only several feet when I had to stop and shield my eyes from the storm of insects.

I could feel my heart beating in my throat and ears. I couldn't make out the water, but I could feel its coolness all around, and I pulled myself as far to the side of the road as I could. I waved my hand, but the bugs swelled like vapor. I pressed my lips together to keep them out of my mouth and shook my head as hard as I could. I felt my way along with the weeds at the side of the road, bending at the waist to grasp them with the tips of my fingers.

"Here, Cap! Here, boy!" My voice was high and raspy, and lost itself in the thick swarm of insects. I spun my arms in front of me, but the mayflies were catching in my nostrils and ears, and I had to stop to paw at my face. When I saw the outline of Cap's body through the frost of wings, I thought it might be a mirage, but I stumbled toward him with my arms stretched out.

I put my hands on his side, running them along his body until I came to his head. Yellow Cap was standing stock-still, his knees locked and his muscles twitching. His eyes were wide and his nostrils flared, snorting at the cloud of bugs. "There's my boy," I said, and he tossed his head, knocking me backwards. I hadn't thought to bring a halter or a rope, so I tugged at his mane and ears to get him to follow me. But Cap's eyes were frozen with fear, and his legs were rigid on the ground. I couldn't see where we were on the road,

and all around us I sensed the water that had killed Polly Cain. Maybe she had just tripped and fallen in. Maybe she had dropped something. I thought of the time I had accidentally inhaled in a swimming pool—the way the water stabbed pain into the backs of my eyes, made my body retch and heave. No houses were close by. No one would have heard her scream.

I kicked at Cap's leg, and he bristled. "Come on!" I shouted. "Come on, you stupid horse. Move!" I pulled as hard as I could. I twisted his ear between my fingers and wrapped my arms around his neck to pull, but my body hung useless from his in the swarm of white. I would never get him back. He would bolt into the water. His hooves would catch in the grates. His legs would snap. His lungs would fill. And I wouldn't be able to stop it. I wouldn't even be able to see it happen—only to hear it. "Please!" I screamed. "You stupid, stupid horse. Please!" I tried to pick up his front foot and move it a step forward, but I couldn't tell which way was safe.

When I heard my father's voice through the hum of insect wings, I thought I was imagining. But then I heard it again. "Alice!"

"Dad, I'm here! I have him. We're here!"

"I can't see a goddamned thing!" "Here!" I called again, choking back a wave of sobs.

His hand touched my shoulder. "Jesus Christ! What the hell are you doing?"

"Cap got out. I was afraid he'd get hit or lost or fall in the water." My fingers were wound through his mane, and I twisted to get them free.

My father pushed me hard and then caught me by the arm before I fell. "I could kill you," he said. "I could kill you for being so stupid." I tried to pull away, but I stumbled in the white haze and grasped the pocket of my father's pants to steady myself.

He took off his shirt and wrapped it around Cap's neck. He had to pull hard, but Cap followed, and we tried to brush the insects away from his eyes as we led him back to the road. My father went ahead, holding my arm to guide me while I clicked my tongue to keep Cap moving. The mayflies swirled around

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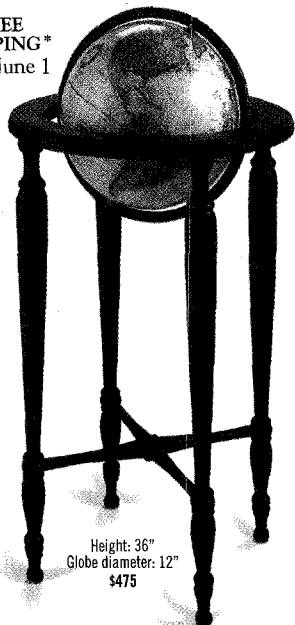
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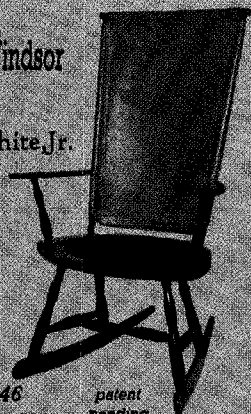
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us like a warm, dry snowstorm, and when I looked up, I could see them rising into the black sky.

When the insects thinned, and we found ourselves on pavement, we stopped, breathless. My arm ached where my father was holding me and when he saw me wince, he let go. I rubbed at my arm. "Sheila shouldn't have told you," I said. "I was fine."

"Like hell," my father said, but his voice was quiet, and he loosened his grip to let Cap nibble at the weeds. He looked back over the clouded water and shook his head.

I held up the palms of my hands and touched at the insects' delicate bodies, at their sheet-white wings, as they billowed up from the canal. The petals of their wings brushed against my palms and evaporated into the darkness. In the moonlight my father's bare chest was pale and smooth against the rough tan of his arms.

"What about the mares?" I asked. "Should you have left them?"

"Alice, horses birth all the time. If a person had to be there to help them, they would have died out centuries ago."

We walked back along the road with Yellow Cap between us, his head low like a dog's.

"Well, Sheila Altman got her money's worth tonight," my father said finally.

"I hate her," I said. I didn't care anymore.

"I know you do." He smiled and pulled at Cap.

"I hate you giving her Nona's horse." My father was quiet for a second.

"This horse is worth a hell of a lot of money, Alice. More than you could even understand." He sighed. "If I sell him, I can afford to hire someone to help me out here."

I stopped. "You have Sheila," I told him, and he laughed. I touched Cap's neck. "You have me."

My father started walking again, faster, and I had to run to keep up. A car passed us on the road, and once it was in front of us, I saw the trail of mayflies behind it, their bodies sprinkling dead onto the pavement.

When we reached the driveway, my father stared up at the house. "There's a light on in your mother's room." He

pointed and I looked. It was small, yellow. A candle. A cloud of mayflies hovered at the light, touching the glass of the window.

"It's the lantern I made her."

"You made her a lantern?"

"Sort of." Polly Cain's nimble fingers lay still beneath feet of dry, dusty earth. I only painted the lantern.

"Why did you do that?"

I looked up at the window. "She wanted something. That was all I had."

He ran his thumb along my lip and then wiped the blood from my face with the heel of his hand. "Why don't you go in to bed now?" I turned my face into his touch and let my chin rest in the cup of his palm. He smelled like sweat and hay and leather. "You're no good to me if you're all worn out. Get some sleep." He started toward the pens, tugging at the shirt around Cap's neck.

"I'm not tired," I told him. "Really. Not at all. I'll stay up."

Before he came out of the pen, he rubbed the spot between Cap's ears and patted his neck. The gate clanged shut, and as my father passed me, he shook his head. "Any other girl would go up to bed." He put his hand around my upper arm and squeezed. "You must be tougher than the rest of them."

My arm was still tender from where he had seized me at the canal, but I flexed my muscle to make it hard. I waited for him to say something, but Sheila Altman came thumping out of the barn waving her arms above her head. "She did it," she cried, jumping up and down. "Oh, my God. It's perfect. Come see, come see!"

The foal was small and wet like all the others, and we huddled together to see over the stall door. Under the weak, yellow barn light it lay with its spindly limbs curled. The mare stood above it, eyes half closed as she lowered her head and paused to take in her foal's scent. Outside, the sky was turning tinsel-gray, and the air had a deeper chill. Pieces of hay and dust hazed the air around us, and we stood silent in the barn, smelling of blood and earth and night, and watched their heads draw together to touch for the first time. ▀

Aryn Kyle recently received her MFA in fiction from the University of Montana. She is at work on a novel.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Magic Rings

Whenever the letter O occurs in an answer, it acts magically on that word. One kind of ring makes an answer shrink or grow by one letter into a new word (as WORN could become WON or SWORN in the grid); another kind changes an answer into its homophone (as CORD could become CHORD or CORED); and the third, most powerful one transforms an answer into an anagram (as HORSE could become SHORE). Two diagram entries crossing on a ring will undergo the same spell. Answers (whose lengths are withheld to make discovery of the rings more cryptic) include four capitalized words; new grid entries include one capitalized word and one two-word phrase.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 160

ACROSS

1. Native of Ireland admitted by a doctor
6. True lass back in port in Africa
11. Fairy-tale giant fish
12. Guarding men in blue, dog gets confident (*two words*)
13. Octet confused about that Spanish flirt
14. Beatnik's personal computer nabbed by police
16. Dress for crashing bore?
17. Splitting meat, understand about greens
18. Jolson divides tasks with tunes
23. Is it done revoltingly?
24. Rating in *About Mary* causes hitch again
28. Brothers straddling North Carolina horses
29. Insure moving of bears
30. Mafia chief in crimes with thrill-seekers?
31. Small sheep adopted by Ruby and mended

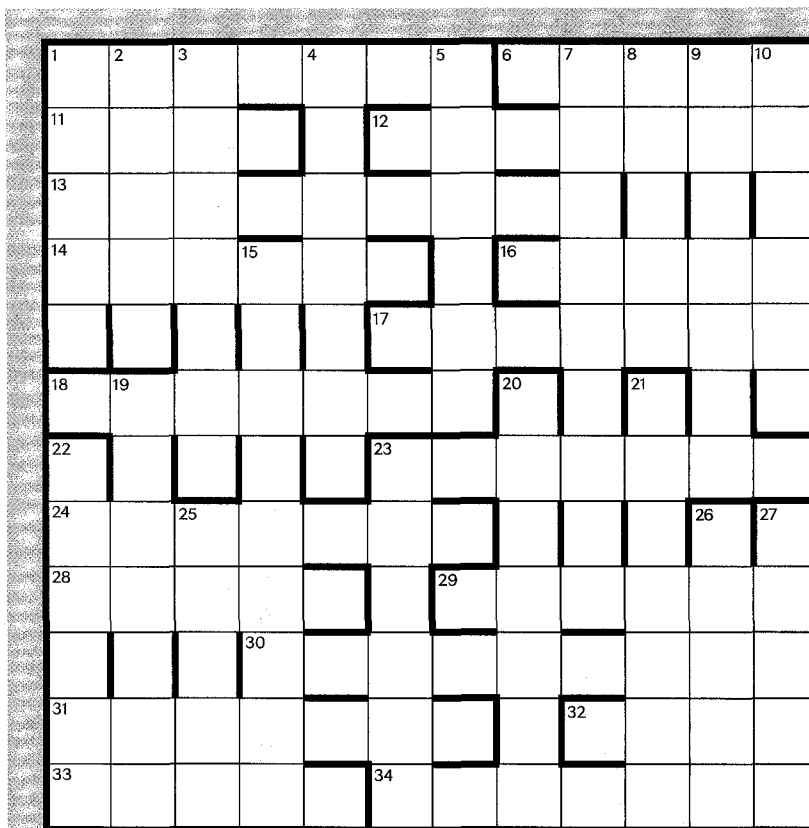
32. Gratuitous charge about Republican
33. Fortune-tellers in department store speaking
34. Sets are adapted for moves in the theater?

DOWN

1. Clever yellow cockroach
2. Bit of Code #12
3. Runners each covered in Mexican article
4. Reptiles bothered us again
5. Jobs in Dutch university—with strings attached
7. Hack sampler of "The Bells" author?
8. Bit of sheer bunk for Highlander
9. Graphite in fruit sack with orange

10. CIA operatives penning long harangues
15. Ms. Fisher and Mr. Adams had an affair (*two words*)
19. Love poetry by one across the ocean
20. Legendary steroid abuse?
21. I compete in railroad on a coast
22. Rash Rob doctored with hides
23. Remover of periods on *E.R.*
25. Rodent gobbles bit of sweet dessert
26. Rock star's first note
27. Passes out some tests inside

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



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WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

Last December this page sought a word for "people who leave long, rambling messages on answering machines and then rattle off their phone numbers at lightning speed in the last second." Of the many people who responded, exactly two dared to admit that they'd ever left such messages themselves. Steve Billington, of Vancouver, British Columbia, suggested the coinage "*idiodidactiphone*: a foolish information provider on your telephone" and confessed, "Sadly, I am among the guilty." Eric C. Besch, of Fayetteville, North Carolina, began by explaining himself: "Somehow I am always befuddled not to have a person answer my call." Besch's suggested term was *prolixity-split*.

Ted Garon, of Mission Viejo, California, wrote not to propose a word but to share his solution to the problem, which, he boasted, has "failed only once in the past three years." His answering-machine message is carefully enunciated and ends like this: "Please say your phone number slowly. We have an elderly butler."

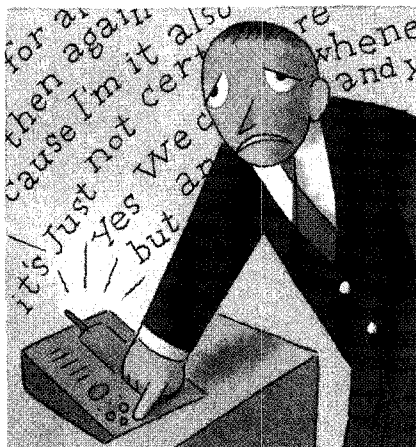
Susan Wallace, of Bainbridge Island, Washington, coined *speedtalking* and had an unusual point of view on the phenomenon. She wrote, "In ESL classes I teach at a community college, telephone practice is a crucial need among nearly all the students. If you think it's tough understanding a message left on the answering machine in your own language, just imagine trying to decipher a message left by a fast-talking doctor's assistant in a language you're just beginning to comprehend."

David P. Nagle, a college professor in Norman, Oklahoma, had no sympathy at all for the perpetrators who get in touch with him: "students whose breathless cell-phone messages fall into cell hell right after a 'dog ate my homework' statement, during the 'please call me right away at [unintelligible]' finale." Nagle's coinage was a variant on what was probably the

most popular suggestion: *prestodigitators*.

And Gregory Pierce, of New York City, wrote, "As an English tutor, I've had to listen to epic phone messages from high schoolers who are in the 'diction is uncool' phase. After listening to a long chain of *ums* and *uhs*, I usually can't understand the crucial digits at the end. I call these people *number-mumblers*. Since there have been so many, I've recently shortened the term to *numblers*." Pierce wasn't the only person to propose this last term, but his explanation for it earns him top honors.

The other December fugitive sought was a word for "the fear of throwing



a party and having no one show up." Considering the time of year when this challenge was issued, it's remarkable that only one person, Chris Macdonald, of Halifax, Nova Scotia, proposed the coinage *AuldLangXiety*.

Kristin Lee, of Exeter, New Hampshire, wrote to say that thinking about this word fugitive had seen her through a long night of being stranded at Baltimore/Washington International Airport with a seven-year-old. That experience no doubt helps explain what she came up with: *No guests for the leery*.

Judy Wagner, of Philadelphia, wrote, "As a former event planner, I can identify. *Humiliation* pretty much sums it up for me." Dawn M. Reeler, of Atlanta, suggested

qualmaraderie. Zach Wechsler, of Los Angeles, proposed *festanoguestaphobia*. Drew Slatton, of Mount Tabor, New Jersey, wrote, "This annoying little fear, which manifests itself as a hole in the pit of one's stomach, is known as *guestnoenteritis*." Coinages that many people proposed include *guestlessness* and *empty-fest syndrome*.

Kathleen DeBold, of Burtonsville, Maryland, takes top honors. Not only is she no stranger to the fear in question, but her word even suggests a slight shift of mindset to make party-givers' anticipation less stressful. DeBold wrote, "I am the executive director of a small non-profit, and we rely on fundraising events for a third of our income. I know too well the dreaded feeling that our party will be a bomb. I call it *fête-alism*."

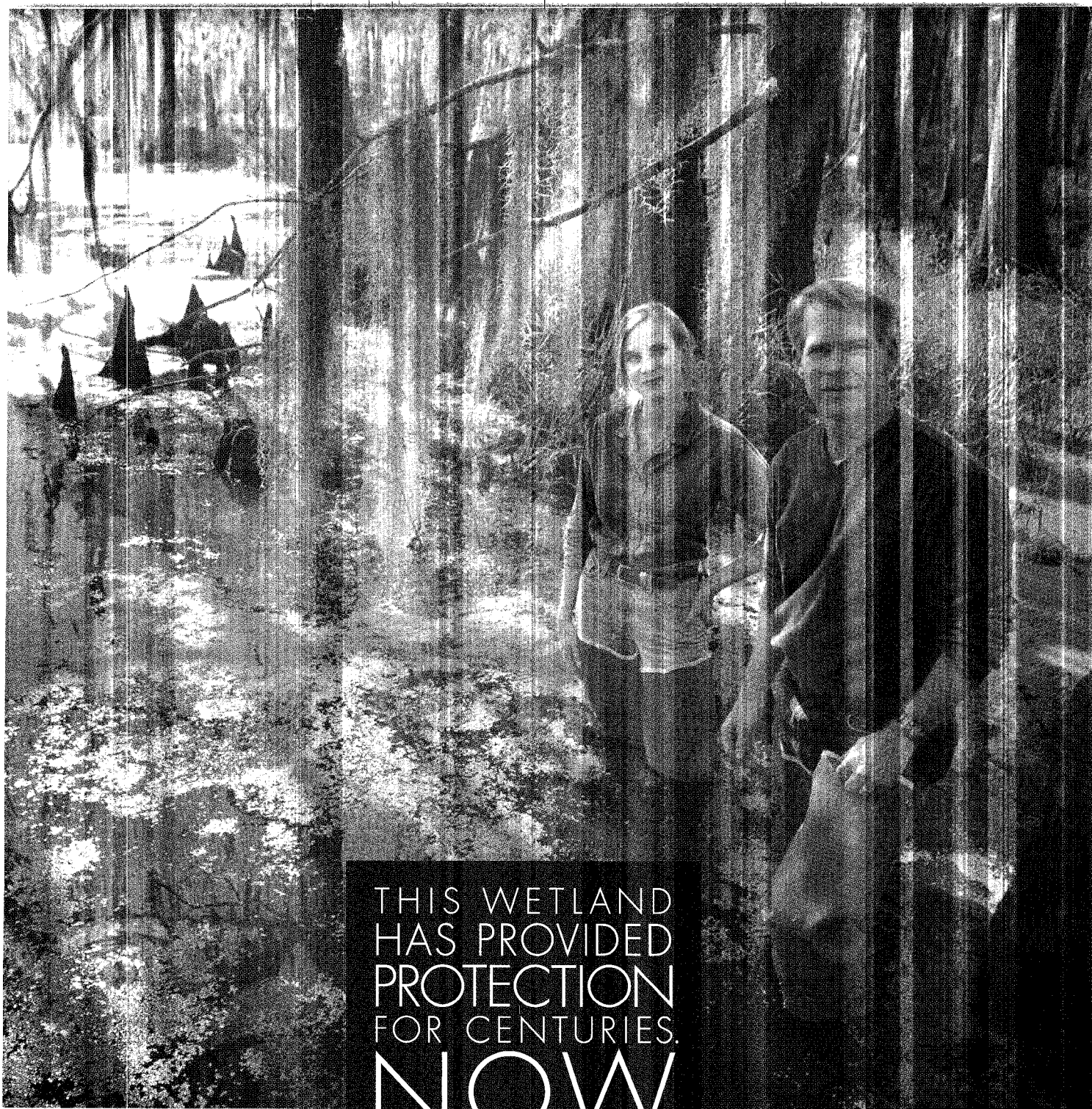
Now GAIL JAROCKI, of Richmond, California, writes, "What is a word to describe the process of going through the dirty-clothes hamper to find something clean enough to wear?"

And ANDY PALEOLOGOPOULOS, of Longmeadow, Massachusetts, writes, "There is a traffic light that is always red when I approach from one direction on the way to work, but when I approach from a different direction on the way home, it is always red in that direction. What is the word for this ability of a traffic light to sense my approach and turn red, knowing it is me?"

Send words that meet Gail Jarocki's or Andy Paleologopoulos's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by May 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent Mediterranean Winter, by Robert D. Kaplan; The Early Stories: 1953-1975, by John Updike; and my own Your Own Words.

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